


PlayStation2 | GameCube | Xbox | PC | GBA | Arcade | Retro

## REVIEWED

- **SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW** [PS2/XB/GC/GBA/PC]
- **METROID: ZERO MISSION** [GBA]
- **METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES** [GC]
- **BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM** [PC]
- **SABRE WULF** [GBA]
- **OLLIE KING** [ARC]
- **SOCOM II** [PS2]

## REVIEW

### FAR CRY

Ubisoft attempts to blow Halo out of the water

25/03

TS1
TS2
TS3
007

From GoldenEye through TimeSplitters to…

# second sight

Free Radical Design's secret project revealed


eMag

Struggling to find a publisher for your game is one of the many perils faced by today's developers. However, when the developer in question is comprised of former Rare employees with a proven track record, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Free Radical Design would be fighting off hordes of publishers.

Alas, this is not the case, and though we don't doubt that *Second Sight* will be snapped up very soon, it does give us the opportunity to bring to you a genuine world exclusive. Since the unveiling of six screenshots and a press release speculation about the game has been rife, but we managed to get the scoop.

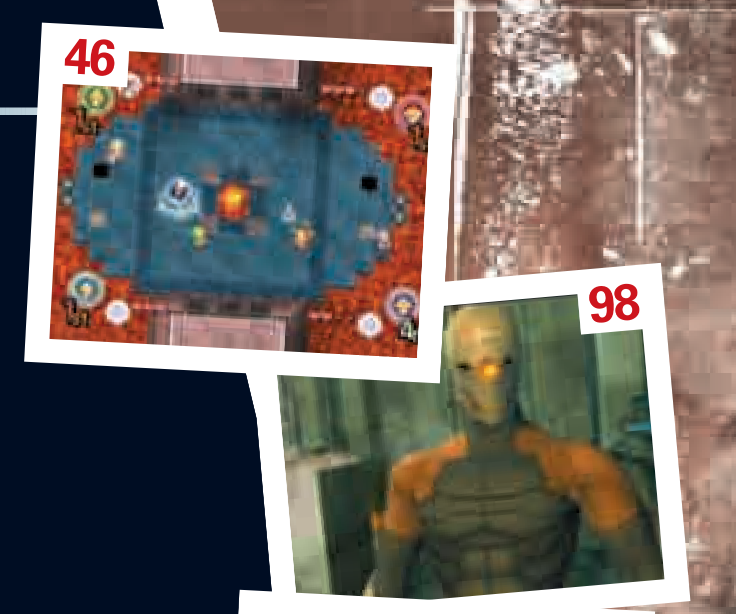
From what we've seen already we're confident that Free Radical Design will deliver, and we're certain that interest from gamers will be high. But whether the title is successful, as is the case with too many games, will be dependent on the company finding the right publisher…



**Simon Phillips,**
**Group Editor**


NEXT
09
HIGH
40
SCORE 3863
LINES 6


NEXT
TRIS
NES
FT
SCORE
000
2
TS 7
SCORE 462
LINES 0




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## REVIEWS



## FEATURES

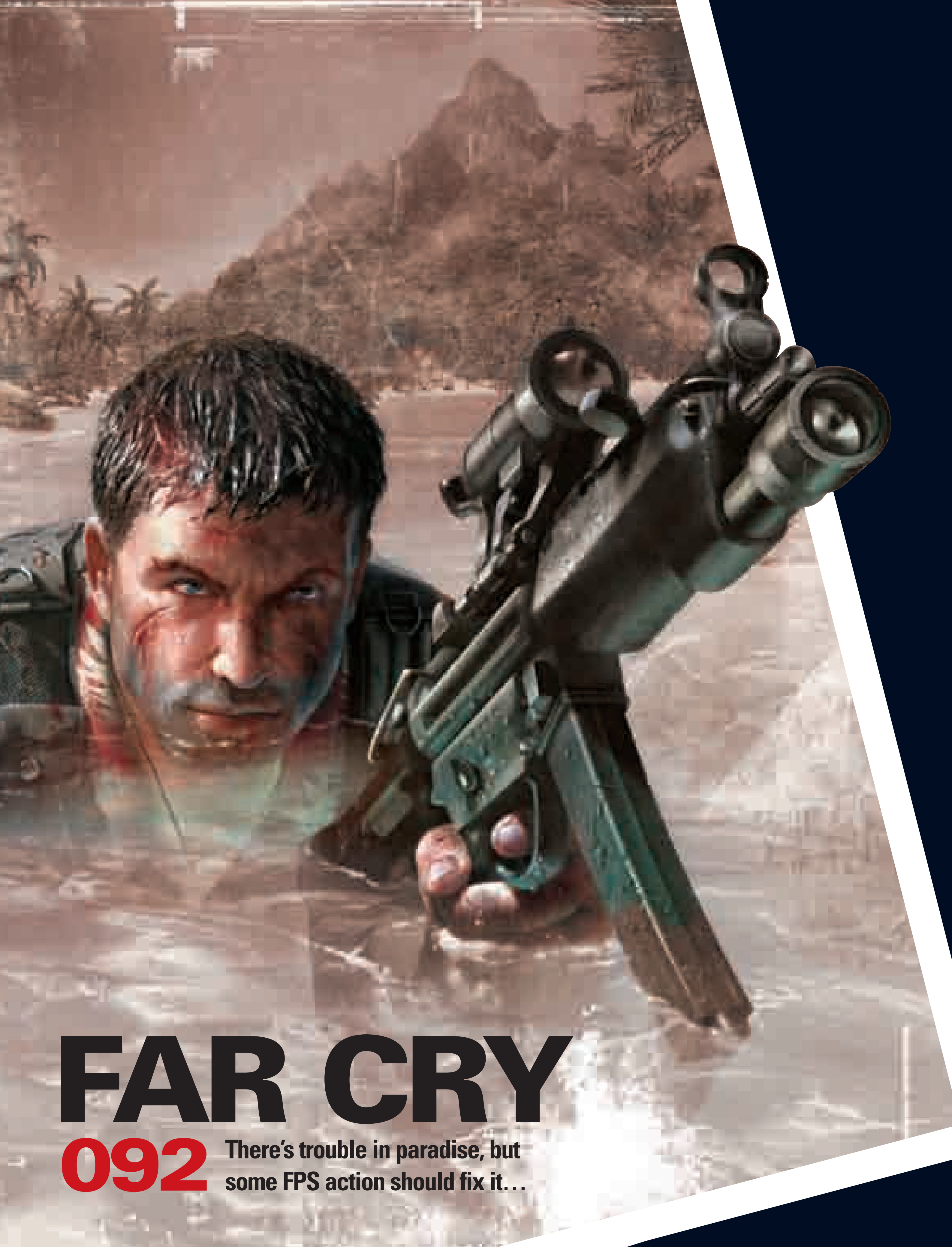


## REGULARS






## RETRO


FAR CRY
092
There's trouble in paradise, but
some FPS action should fix it…

# NEWS

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FIND OUT WHERE TO GET THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS








MICROSOFT PREPARES TO UNLEASH PREMIUM CONTENT UPON THE MASSES, BUT IS IT WHAT GAMERS WANT?

# NEW LEVELS, MORE MONEY

**With the excitement of Xbox Live still running high, the reality of paying for Premium content downloads is starting to sink in.** While there are currently over 120 pieces of downloadable content available via Live, more developers are beginning to charge for them. *Xbox Music Mixer* is currently the biggest culprit and expects you to pay £5.99 for five pre-selected songs. Future titles like *RalliSport Challenge 2* are already sporting prices next to certain download packages.

Premium content was always going to be hard to market, but our biggest concern is how it could affect



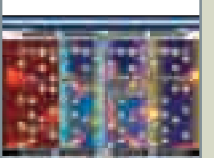
"PREMIUM CONTENT WAS ALWAYS GOING TO BE HARD TO MARKET, BUT OUR BIGGEST CONCERN IS HOW IT COULD AFFECT FUTURE GAMING SESSIONS"

future gaming sessions. Downloadable levels for £3 may sound like a bargain, but it's an issue when you can no longer play a friend who won't pay for the same extras. While you could play one of the other 70-plus games that are available, it does mean you're restricted by a service that originally adopted a 'play anything, play with anyone' approach. Obviously, creating games is a costly process, but it's incredibly frustrating to buy a game only to realise that it has extra content that you have to pay for. However, this isn't usually the fault of the developer.

"I'm not sure about the majority," explains Martyn Brown, creative director at Team 17, which is currently working on several secret Xbox titles. "It's certainly down to the strategy of the publisher and how they want to handle income streams and stuff. Generally, we simply do what we're requested to."

Fortunately, most Premium content offers good value for money with games like *Mech Assault* giving you new gameplay features as well as extra mechs and maps. This seems fine to us, but we'll be less than happy if games start appearing with content that's simply been left off the main game, or is currently locked on the disc enabling companies to extract more money from us at a later date.

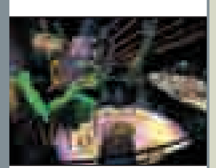
With this in mind, perhaps the biggest indication of Xbox Live's direction will be when content for *Project Gotham Racing 2* becomes available. Hacked game views and compressed sound files for Paris have already been discovered on the disc, and we're interested to see what Microsoft has in store for Bizarre Creations' excellent racer. Whether the above features eventually appear remains to be seen, but with the game being such a success, and with over 750,000 Live users worldwide, we'd be very surprised if Microsoft doesn't try to extract as much money from it as possible…



Content available before the game's release? Hmm…



*Mech Assault* was among the first titles to receive new content via download.



A stretch too far for Microsoft? *Music Mixer* has ushered in a worrying trend.



It's not even at review stage, but *RalliSport 2* already has buyable content.



Delays in the East certainly aren't doing Xbox Live support any favours.

# LIVING LIVE TO THE FULL

## WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THE FUTURE HAS IN STORE FOR XBOX LIVE

### PREPARE TO GET DRENCHED IN A TIDAL WAVE OF NEW CONTENT

Microsoft is getting ready to launch its latest update for the Xbox Live service, with many of the features first announced at last year's E3 finally set to appear. Codenamed 'Tsunami' the new updates will include integration with MSN Messenger, voicemail, several clan features and online storage.

Due to roll out in the next few months, the new features look set to enhance the ease of the Live service and make setting up games with other players simpler than ever. You'll now be able to leave up to 15 seconds of voicemail when sending or receiving new friend requests or game invitations, which will be integrated with MSN Messenger so you can contact friends who are using their PCs online.

Clans will also be catered for. Teams can record stats, arrange games and challenge rivals. It's also hoped that Tsunami will feature an all-new competition structure that will enable developers to implement prize tournaments. This is already extremely popular with PC gamers and is bound to improve Live's profile. The last addition is online storage that will let users share custom content like maps, logos and team sheets (though we'd be surprised if Microsoft lets you share downloadable content).

While we're still unsure about the price of some downloads, these improvements are very welcome.

### UNDERSTANDING ASIA

The Asian market features one of the largest concentrations of online gaming in the world, so it was hardly surprising when Microsoft revealed it would be launching Xbox Live in South Korea. Unfortunately, it hasn't been the success that Microsoft was hoping for, and since last October only around 6,500 gamers have subscribed to the service. Of course, one of the biggest problems is that the Xbox doesn't really deliver the sort of games that our Eastern cousins wish to play.

"One thing I hear loud and clear is that you need to build a portfolio of games that is appropriate for the Asian market," said Alan Bowman, general manager of Xbox in Asia. Indeed, with the recent revelation that *True Fantasy Live Online* is now unlikely to appear until the end of 2004 in Japan it's little wonder that development studios in Korea and Taiwan are working on 30 new titles in order to penetrate this difficult (for Microsoft, at least) market.

## Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



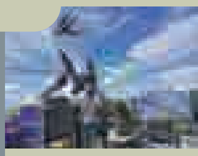
### FALSE ALARM

**Crytek should be accustomed to life in the spotlight thanks to the attention its alluring *Far Cry* project has attracted recently, but the German developer came under a rather less welcome form of scrutiny when its offices were raided by the Bavarian constabulary last month. Acting on a tip-off from a disgruntled former Crytek employee, police believed the studio to be in possession of pirate software, yet after a three-hour search the authorities were satisfied that the developer held valid licences for all software on the premises.**

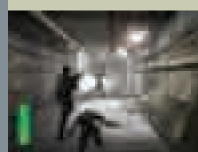


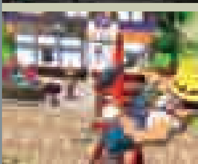
### RADICAL MOVE

**Vivendi Universal Games has signed a six-game deal with Canadian developer Radical Entertainment. The partnership has already produced such bestselling titles as *The Simpsons: Hit And Run* and movie tie-in *The Hulk*. "We are looking forward to focusing our development efforts with VU Games, as we've had tremendous success working with them," said Radical chairman and CEO Ian Wilkinson.**

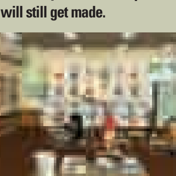


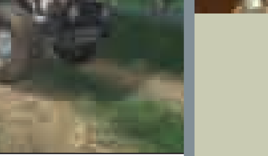
Don't worry – the Cube isn't the last Ninty home console.

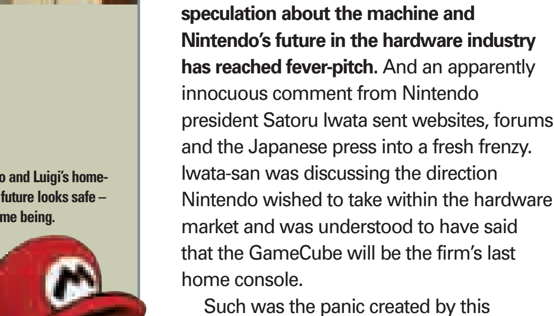




Quirky titles like *Giftpia* will still get made.







Mario and Luigi's home-console future looks safe – for the time being.

NINTENDO ADDRESSES THE RUMOURS SURROUNDING ITS FUTURE

# JUST THE FACTS

**Since Nintendo announced its innovative DS handheld system, speculation about the machine and Nintendo's future in the hardware industry has reached fever-pitch.** And an apparently innocuous comment from Nintendo president Satoru Iwata sent websites, forums and the Japanese press into a fresh frenzy. Iwata-san was discussing the direction Nintendo wished to take within the hardware market and was understood to have said that the GameCube will be the firm's last home console.

Such was the panic created by this remark, Nintendo's shares actually suffered a temporary drop in price, although their value has since been restored. Nintendo eventually had to release a statement to clear the whole sorry mess up (and no doubt restore the fallen share prices).

"It [Iwata's comment] was supposed to mean that Sony and Microsoft are expected to release their next-generation consoles from 2005 to 2006, and we also wouldn't be releasing one until that period," said Nintendo's PR manager, Yasuhiro Minagawa. "Like our Nintendo DS portable game machine, our home game machine must offer an experience that can be enjoyed by adults, children, or women," he continued, before adding that "we would like to show this at E3 next spring."

Despite this reassuring news, the GameCube continues to generate an almost impenetrable shroud of doom around itself. Even a huge sales boost at the beginning of the year has done little to sway the public's perception of the machine and it continues to receive short shrift from retailers and developers alike.

*Burnout 3* and *Driv3r* are just two of the forthcoming high-profile releases that won't be appearing on the Cube, and Team 17 is the latest in a long line of developers that's considering whether it's worth continuing to support Nintendo's console. Even certain high-street stores are revaluing stock again. WH Smiths was recently selling the console for the ridiculously low price of £20 (or £40 with a Game Boy Player), although, admittedly, this was at only one store and the chain is still stocking the machine at its regular retail price.

Unsurprisingly, Nintendo was not fazed by this recent price revelation, with Shelly Pearce, Nintendo Europe's head of PR,

"WE ARE STILL SCEPTICAL ABOUT ONLINE GAMING AND HAVE NOT YET SEEN ANY EVIDENCE IN THE CURRENT GENERATION OF CONSOLES THAT IT MAKES VIABLE BUSINESS SENSE"





simply stating that "retailers make their own price points for the hardware." Indeed, Nintendo has bullishly refused to follow typical conventions of what should be expected from a next-generation console (online gaming, backwards compatibility, DVD playback) and continually decides to walk its own path. "We are still sceptical about online gaming and have not yet seen any evidence in the current generation of consoles that it makes viable business sense," Pearce explains. "However, we are continuing to look at the possibility of using it in the future."

In the heat of the latest home-console confusion, a rumour was circulating that claimed that Nintendo would release add-ons for the GameCube in place of any new system. And now it appears that there may be some truth in it.

"Specific details about any accessories or systems and their functionalities haven't yet been made public," says Pearce. "However, Nintendo does have several hardware strategies underway for the future. In addition to the ongoing development of the next console, we are also considering accessories for the GameCube that will provide enhanced gameplay."

We wouldn't be surprised if we do see an add-on for the machine in future. Developers like Factor 5 have already stated that *Rebel Strike* manages to push the machine to its limits, and the addition of the N64 expansion pack allowed developers to take the N64 further than was initially possible. Regardless of where its competitors are heading, however, it seems that Nintendo will continue to carve its own niche in the industry.

## NINTENDO REVEALS EVEN MORE DS INFO

**As E3 gets ever closer, Nintendo has revealed another interesting snippet of information about its potentially ground-breaking new handheld. A recent interview with Japanese newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun* saw Nintendo's president, Satoru Iwata, confirming that the DS will feature wireless communication capabilities. The announcement suggests that multiplayer gaming will be an important feature of the DS, although we're more intrigued by the touch-screen rumours that continue to circulate.**

**Iwata-san himself knows that the DS may not immediately find an appreciative audience. "In a crowd of a hundred people, only ten or 15 might applaud," he said. Despite his reservations, the buzz surrounding the machine is already very positive, and is bound to get better after E3.**




# 'NEXT-GEN CONSOLE RACE' STORY

### FIRST DEVELOPMENT KITS HINT AT XBOX HEAD START

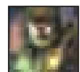
**There's been no shortage of rumour-mongering about what we can expect to find under the bonnet of Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo's next-generation consoles.** Yet while much still remains shrouded in mystery, the release of early software development kits by Microsoft finally gives some indication about the technology that will power the Xbox 2.

Unpredictably, the packages turning up at development studios are branded with the Apple logo, as the system is actually a derivative of the Apple Power Mac G5 hardware. While Microsoft stresses that later development kits will feature the IBM PowerPC chip planned to appear in the final console, the Apple G5 is currently the closest substitute available. Similarly, as work on the new ATI graphics chip that will power the Xbox 2's cutting-edge visuals is also yet to be completed, the kits instead contain the latest Radeon 9800 Pro tools. While the makeshift prototype kits are far from ideal, they do give developers a starting point for the production of Xbox 2 games.

The release of the technology by Microsoft has fuelled industry speculation that its next-gen machine could appear in stores before Sony's PS3 or Nintendo's N5, to give the Xbox 2 a head start in the sales race. However, game developers can only do so much until details about how much RAM the console will be able to access are confirmed, and the burning question of whether Xbox 2 will have a hard drive is resolved.

# Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



## IT'S A DATE

**There must be very few Xbox owners out there who aren't eagerly awaiting the return of the Master Chief, his trusty Warthog and perhaps the most impressive FPS action ever to grace the console, but we've hardly heard a peep out of either Microsoft or developer Bungie on the subject since last year's E3. However, in a welcome announcement on Bungie's website, the *Halo 2* team reassured the world that it is confident of an autumn release date for the massively enhanced follow-up to the game that has been responsible for shifting more Xboxes than any other title.**





## SEGA TOOLS UP

**SEGA could become the latest major industry player to pledge its support to Nintendo's recently announced dual-screen handheld device, the enigmatic DS. Namco and Konami have already revealed they will be producing software for the new platform, and SEGA president Hisao Oguchi has confirmed his company currently has development tools from Nintendo. While SEGA is only evaluating the system's potential at present, it has already agreed to support Sony's PSP, so a similar deal with Nintendo is likely.**





VICE CITY RULES AT THE FIRST BAFTA GAMES AWARDS

# AND THE BAFTA GOES TO…

■ *Advance Wars 2* picked up a brace of awards.

■ The gaming BAFTAs should help raise the industry's profile.

**As videogames become more mainstream it seemed about time for the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) to give our favourite pastime the recognition it deserves.** And in keeping with this populist drive, some of the results at February's ceremony were hardly surprising.

Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* walked off with six gongs, including BAFTAs for Best Action Title, Best Sound, Best Design, Best PlayStation2 Title and Best PC Title. The ultra-violent gangster romp also picked up the Sunday Times Reader Award for Games, which was voted for by the public. Another big-selling title to do well was *FIFA 2004*, which scooped the award for Best Sports Title. However, though we're a little disappointed that such big categories were won by choices that seem a little too 'obvious', most of the results were right on the button.

The ever-popular Nintendo ended up with four awards, including two for the excellent *Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising*, which won Best GBA Title and Best Strategy Game, while *Metroid Prime* and *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* won Best GameCube Game and Best Adventure. Nintendo won 14 awards at various ceremonies in 2003, so it's already well on its way to beating this tally in 2004.

Sony also had a strong night with its innovative EyeToy, walking off with both Best Children's Game and Best Technical Achievement. "Receiving two BAFTAs for *EyeToy: Play* is a great honour as these awards are voted for by other game developers," said Jamie MacDonald, development director of the London Studio. "The whole team is thrilled that we have created a game which is not only a great commercial success but also one which is a critical success."

Perhaps the biggest surprise was *Call Of Duty* winning the award for Best Game On Any Platform, which brought Activision's total for the night up to two (it also walked away with Best Xbox Game for *Knights Of The Old Republic*). "The award of 'The Year's Best Game' is testament to the dedication of everyone involved with the creation and launch of a game with so much ambition," said Daleep Chhabria, brand manager at Activision. "It's a true honour to receive such a prestigious award on behalf of Infinity Ward and Activision, especially against such fierce competition. We're looking forward to the future of the *Call Of Duty* brand on multiple platforms – this is just the beginning."

Though the gaming BAFTAs are some way off achieving the high-profile status of the film and television ceremonies, this is still a step in the right direction for the games industry.

AND YOU THOUGHT TETRIS WAS A BRAIN-TEASER…

# THE LIFE OF THE MIND

**A British company has developed a game that it claims is controlled by the power of the mind.** Wooden Tots has signed a deal with Swedish developers Interactive Productline to distribute *Mindball*, which, we hope, will see it appear in arcades across the country.

The game sees two people sitting at either end of a table as they attempt to score a goal by manoeuvring a ball with their minds. Each player wears an electrode-stuffed headband that registers electrical activity in the brain. A biosensor reads this information and uses it to move the ball.

"*Mindball* is a unique concept that we are sure will grab the imagination of the gaming public in the same way the first computer game did," said Lee Jones, co-founder of Wooden Tots. "As *Mindball* does not depend on general knowledge, strength or tactics, it allows people of different ages and abilities the chance to compete against each other on an equal basis."

We'd be lying if we said we weren't a bit sceptical. Moving a small ball around doesn't seem comparable to that first play on *Space Invaders*. We're also not sure how Wooden Tots will justify the £4-per-play price, or if it will be able to convince anyone over 25 to play it. After all, we've all seen *Scanners*…



"Hnnnnnrgh" – the sound of *Mindball*.

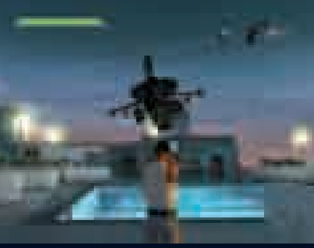



## MOVIE GAMES THAT MISSED THE BOAT



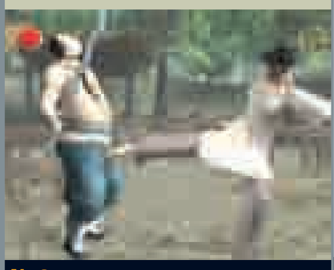
**No.5 THE GREAT ESCAPE**

At least it's on every Christmas



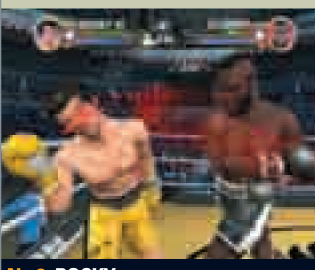
**No.4 BAD BOYS II**

Just in time for the DVD release



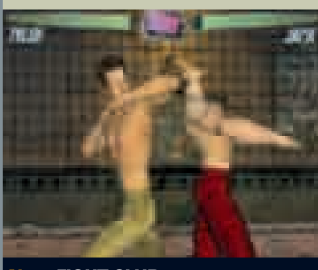
**No.3 CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON**

Cool kung-fu, but a terrible game



**No.2 ROCKY**

About 17 years too late, in fact



**No.1 FIGHT CLUB**

Meat Loaf, with breasts… ewww



CRITERION'S MIDDLEWARE PICKS UP MORE FOLLOWERS

# READY TO RENDERWARE

**Criterion Software's RenderWare technology is rapidly becoming an industry favourite, as newly formed Circle Studio has announced that it will be using the development software.** The popular middleware is already employed by the likes of Konami, Rockstar North and Hudson, and Circle will be using it in conjunction with its own bespoke tools.

"The industry is not about technology any more, it's about creativity," explained Circle's managing director, Jeremy Heath-Smith. "Our philosophy as a developer is to concentrate on creativity, gameplay and content – the elements that truly add value to individual titles and ultimately the industry as a whole."

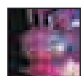
It is hoped that the new deal will allow Derby-based Circle Studio to optimise its efficiency and to focus its efforts on the creative side of game development, rather than technical matters. "We cannot afford to continually chase technology and reinvent the wheel for every game we work on," Heath-Smith explained. "Outsourcing technology to Criterion means we immediately have a robust framework in place."

Criterion is also pleased with this latest development. "Building technologies in-house as a point of pride is no longer commercially sensible today, and nor will it be viable as we move towards the next generation," said Criterion CEO David Lau-Kee. "Generating unique content, delivering ground-breaking creative concepts and gameplay, and building valuable IP are the elements that are ultimately going to drive a company's value proposition."

Although Circle Studio has revealed that its two new titles (currently due for PS2 and Xbox) will use Renderware, it's reluctant to reveal any further details. With so many developers using Criterion's technology, we're expecting it to be in an extremely strong position when the next generation of consoles arrives.

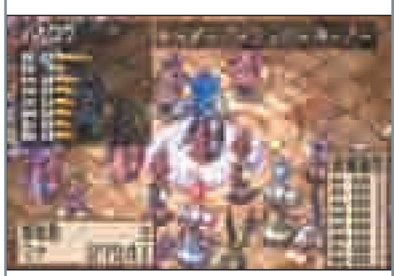
## Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



### BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

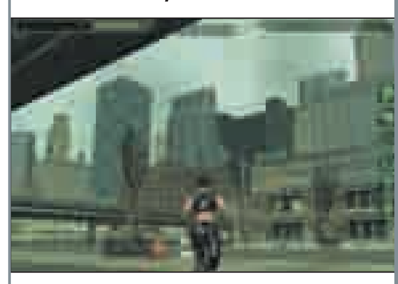
Nippon Ichi's superb tactical RPG *Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness* has to be among the finest games we've reviewed in recent months (9/10, Issue 14), but we've had to wait until now to get confirmation of a European release. Although the game's acclaimed follow-up, *Phantom Brave*, is already adorning the Japanese charts, the good news for those yet to sample the epic role-playing formula of the original is that publisher Koei has confirmed the turn-based masterpiece will arrive in stores across the UK by the end of May.

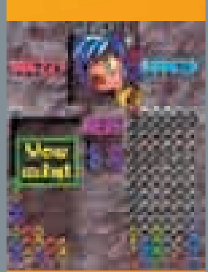




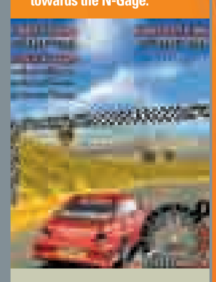
### EXIT THE MATRIX

Monolith's hotly anticipated MMORPG debut, *The Matrix Online*, will no longer be published by Ubisoft after the partnership was terminated by mutual agreement. Warner Brothers' recently established videogame publishing division, WBIE, has taken over duties from Ubisoft for the time being, although this is expected to be a temporary arrangement until another of the industry's major players snaps up the rights to Monolith's potential blockbuster. Gamers will be pleased to know that the virtual Matrix universe is still on track to go live by the end of the year.





Some promising titles haven't lured gamers towards the N-Gage.

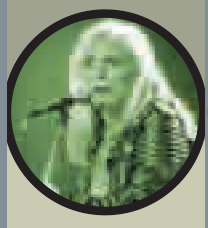


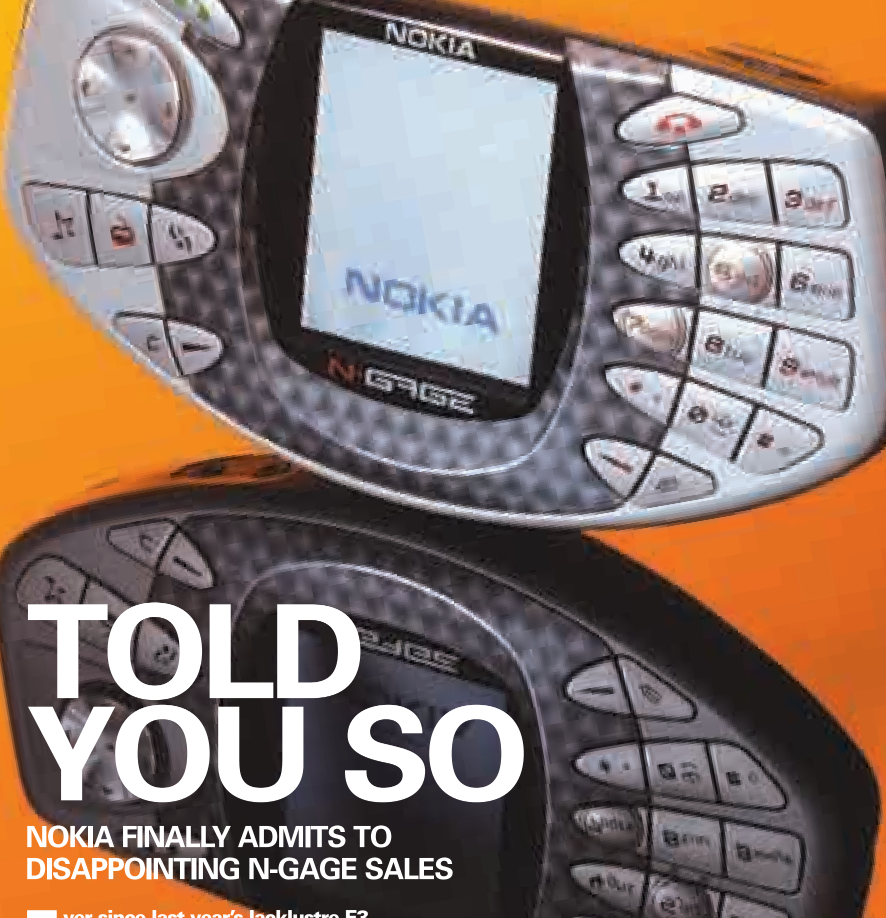


### SEPARATED AT BIRTH

games™ tracks down those videogame lookalikes

One is Blondie frontwoman Debbie Harry, the other is that scary woman from *Silent Hill*. But who shrieks the loudest?







# TOLD YOU SO

## NOKIA FINALLY ADMITS TO DISAPPOINTING N-GAGE SALES

**Ever since last year's lacklustre E3 presentation, Nokia's N-Gage has struggled to get itself taken seriously by consumers and the games industry.** Now, after GameStop (one of the US's biggest games chains) announced it would stop selling N-Gages in 450 of its stores, Nokia's CEO and president, Jorma Ollila, has admitted that the machine isn't living up to expectations. "The sales are in the lower quartile of the bracket we had as our goal," Ollila explained to the *Financial Times*.

No actual sales figures have been released, although we know that only 600,000 units have been shipped to retailers – well below Nokia's original sales predictions of six million and hinting that considerably less machines have found their way into the hands of consumers.

Of course, for many gamers (especially those who have seen the machine in action) this news isn't exactly surprising. However, Ollila's admission does mark an abrupt change of direction for Nokia, which had previously insisted the machine was performing very well.

Compounding Nokia's embarrassment, EA president and COO John Riccitiello recently attacked the mobile console's design during an interview with Reuters, before pointing out that its software sales had been even more disappointing than the lacklustre hardware figures. "When I picked that thing up I knew it was a dog," Riccitiello declared, "it just feels stupid." The statement will no doubt come as a blow to Nokia, which has so far received strong support from the world's largest videogames publisher and boasts the likes of *FIFA 2004* and *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004* among the most successful titles in its portfolio. Riccitiello went on to admit that he fully expects Nokia to become a major player in the games industry some time in the future, but certainly not with the N-Gage.

This is hardly the first publicised setback for the bizarrely designed handheld, as Nokia has had a tough time trying to win over the gaming public since day one. The N-Gage has already endured several humiliations, including being cut to half price within a month of going on sale. Despite these hindrances, Ollila insists that the machine should be given until November 2005 to prove itself. But with Sony's PSP out in less than a year, Nokia might realistically be forced to bring that deadline forward.

# MOBILE MICROSOFT

## COMPANY ANNOUNCES PORTABLE PROJECTS

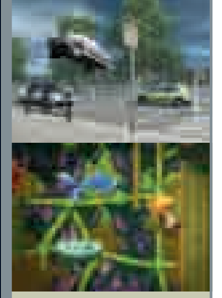
**Microsoft Game Studios has joined forces with mobile game service provider In-Fusio to port six of its titles to cellphones. *Midtown Madness 3* will be the first release, followed by *Age Of Empires 2, Banjo-Kazooie: Grunty's Revenge, Sabre Wulf, Zoo Tycoon* and *It's Mr Pants*.**

***Midtown Madness 3* will feature 3D and multiplayer capabilities and is scheduled to appear on In-Fusio's ExEn and EGE (In-Fusio's new gaming engine) in June. "We are delighted to join Microsoft Game Studios in this bold initiative," said In-Fusio's co-CEO and president, Gilles Raymond. "Microsoft's commitment to license some of its best-known titles for the mobile games arena is a clear indication of the industry's maturity."**

**In-Fusio is one of the leading mobile games providers in Europe, the US and China, with its game engine already installed in over 15 million handsets, so it's no surprise that Microsoft has chosen it as a representative in this rapidly expanding market.**



*Grunty's Revenge* will be on a phone near you soon.



Rare's *Sabre Wulf* will also get the mobile treatment.

# PLAY BEFORE YOU PAY

## MOBILE GAMERS CAN TRY BEFORE THEY BUY

**A new emulation program will let mobile-phone gamers try out new titles before they pay for them.** Macrospace's EmuX software emulates a number of mobile phones and should provide a more in-depth look at games than the current single screenshot and short description upon which most purchases are based.

"The presentation of mobile games is ultimately the most critical part of any mobile games service," said Kristian Segerstrale, head of products and services at Macrospace. "Having a tool like EmuX is a major differentiator for companies wishing to attract and retain high-value customers. Most importantly, the ability to emulate mobile games on a variety of devices means mobile gaming can appeal to novice users and casual gamers, and not just tech-savvy mobile owners."

Since its launch at the start of the year, EmuX has already been used over a million times, and is supported by the likes of O2, Orange, MSN and the Cartoon Network. Many handsets are already emulated by EmuX, including the Nokia N-Gage, Nokia series 30, 40 and 60, and Sony's Ericsson T610 as well as Siemens' S55. Additional support for the likes of Motorola and LG are expected soon.

With the average mobile game costing at least £5 it's great to see that we can now get a preview of a title before splashing our cash, and we hope that this will become the norm by the end of the year.

Never buy a duffer again.



EmuX is already popular.

# GAMES ROOM 101

## THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING



**NO.17: CHARGING BY THE SECOND (HAND)**

**The idea of second-hand games is one that we like – not only does it give us a chance to clear out our cupboards every so often, but it also offers the possibility of finding real gems for a fraction of the price.** Or at least it would if the concept worked as it should but, unfortunately, some stores are getting greedy.

Our own Mr Shape discovered a worrying trend of price-fixing in the US way back in issue 4, and we've started to notice that the prices of many second-hand games are getting stupidly high. Call us old-fashioned, but we'd expect to pay no more than half the original price for a second-hand game, and yet titles like *Halo* and *Burnout 2* are still going for around £30, despite being released ages ago. What's more, many games aren't in a fit state to be resold – destroyed manuals and scratched discs being the most common complaints – and yet these problems never appear to affect the asking price.

Second-hand games should come with a second-hand price, not to mention be in a good enough condition to resell in the first place. Right now the whole system's a bit of a con, and if there's one thing we hate, it's being ripped off.



Out since the Xbox's launch, but still selling for as much as £30 in various second-hand bins.

Everyone ignored *Beyond Good & Evil*, so it's selling at £20 brand new; cheaper than a lot of second-hand games right now.

**Data stream**
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

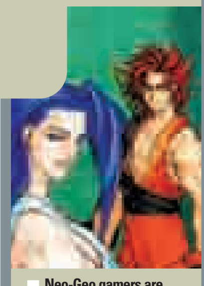


### FACE TO FACE

Ever since the release of Sony's EyeToy, the PlayStation2 community has been rife with speculation about the interactive possibilities this peripheral could introduce to gaming beyond its current implementation – particularly online. Encouragingly, a recent demonstration at the IPv6 Business Summit in Tokyo brought the video-conferencing capabilities of the console's webcam-like attachment to the fore, hinting at the viability of the EyeToy as a communication device for PS2 online titles which are rumoured to be in development at the moment.



**Apology time**
Issue 16 featured a news story that implied Bizarre Creations is now working exclusively for Microsoft's Xbox. Of course, any gamer worth their salt will know that this is not the case and that Bizarre Creations is not exclusively tied to any single console or publisher. Again, we apologise for this error and any difficulty it may have caused Bizarre Creations. Rest assured that the offending journalist has been strung up for the blue tits to peck at.

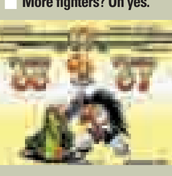


Neo-Geo gamers are annoyed by the news.



*Metal Slug* will carry on.

More fighters? Oh yes.



# BORED OF BOARDS

## SNK DITCHES MVS BOARDS FOR ATOMISWAVE

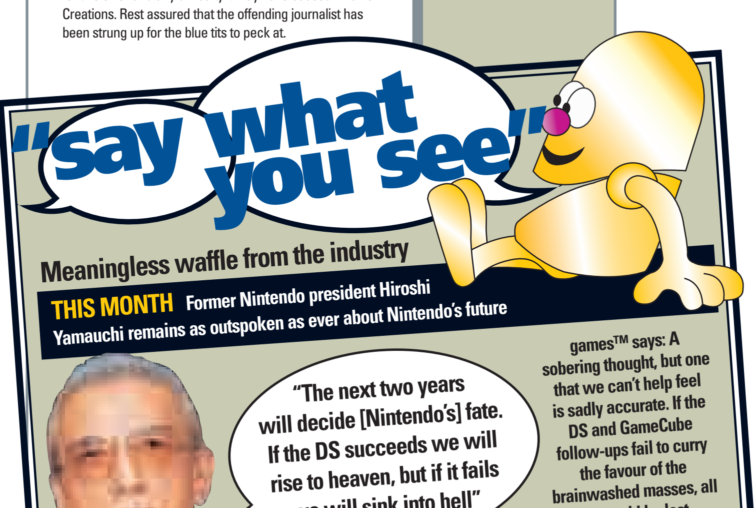
**SNK Playmore has revealed that its arcade games will no longer appear on Neo Geo MVS arcade boards. Instead the company will now be using Sammy's low-cost Atomiswave hardware.** SNK has been using MVS boards for 13 years, and this announcement has upset the loyal Neo Geo community. Without MVS boards, hundreds of franchises will no longer appear on the Neo Geo home console.

"There have been talks in the past about when we'll stop supporting the NeoGeo, but this is going to be the real end," said Kazuya Hirata, SNK Playmore's development chief. "We hope to continue developing and to evolve the capabilities of the Atomiswave." The move to the Atomiswave boards will allow SNK Playmore to produce better-looking titles and will hopefully help it to maximise profits in a sector which is still incredibly popular in Japan.

It would appear that the first games to appear on the new hardware will be sequels to *King Of Fighters*, *Samurai Spirits* and the ever-popular *Metal Slug* series.

SNK has not said if it will produce a home version of the Atomiswave board, but we wouldn't be surprised if it concentrates on porting titles directly to the PS2. The likes of *Metal Slug 3* and *Guilty Gear XX* have already been converted, so we expect this trend to continue.






PHANTOM CHIEF AMONG ELSPA SUMMIT SPEAKERS

# TOP MEN AT SUMMIT

**Infinium Labs' president and CEO Kevin Bachus will be one of the key speakers at this year's ELSPA Summit.** Bachus will speak alongside SCEE's president, David Reeves, and David Gosen, Nintendo's managing director for sales and marketing in Europe. The presence of these industry veterans should help to raise the profile of the event, which was launched last year by the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association. The two-day June summit aims to allow high-flyers in the games industry to get together to discuss the issues that they'll face in the coming year.

"The insights and opinions of the industry's leaders will make essential listening for anyone with a stake in the computer and videogames industry," said Tamsin Aspinall, business development director at ELSPA. "ELSPA is well placed to deliver the right people, speaking about the issues that matter."

As yet, no speakers from Microsoft have been confirmed – which is odd, seeing as Nintendo and Sony have already signed up. Of course, Kevin Bachus helped launch the Xbox so may be able to offer some insights, but he will no doubt be more concerned about his new Phantom project.




BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



## TOGETHER AT LAST

EA finally consummated its 11-year relationship with Illinois-based developer NuFX by buying the studio for an undisclosed sum. "EA and NuFX have worked on 15 games together and this deal solidifies that EA is committed to growing this development studio and will continue to provide us with the best tools and creative direction to make great EA games," said NuFX president Lou Haehn, co-founder of the studio which is currently developing boxing sim *Fight Night* and is perhaps best known for the fantastic *NBA Street* series.



## EXTRA HOMEWORK

Students across Scotland are teaming up to compete in the annual 'Dare to be Digital' contest. Teams submit their ideas for an innovative new game to a panel of experts who will select six finalists to build a prototype version over the next ten weeks. In previous years the contest has been heralded a huge success that has greatly contributed to the future of the UK games industry, with talented entrants being snapped up by major studios. With more support than ever, this year is set to be no exception.



*Desert Combat* has proved a hit with fans.

This *Battlefield* mod is based on real-life events.



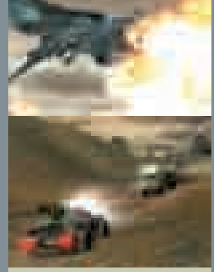
### DIGITAL ILLUSIONS ENLISTS BATTLEFIELD 1942 MOD MAKERS

# MODS RULE

***Battlefield 1942*** **developer Digital Illusions has signed up an unknown studio to work on a new title in the series, based on the strength of its *1942* mod.** New York's Trauma Studios created the *Desert Combat* mod based on real-life events in the Middle East from the last ten years. It's proved so popular that Digital Illusions has invited the studio on board.

"We understand the impact *Desert Combat* had quite early," explained Digital Illusions' CEO, Patrick Soderlund. "This mod kept *Battlefield*'s popularity in place during the last year, as well as helped us sell a considerable amount of games." Trauma Studios will be working on an as-yet unnamed game in the *Battlefield* series, whose latest instalment – *Battlefield Vietnam* – is out now.

With the mod scene flourishing, and so many unsung studios enhancing existing titles with new skins and arenas, it's encouraging that Trauma Studios has been given the recognition it deserves. Let's hope more small studios get a big break.



BAM! needs triple-A titles to boost its funds.

# BAM ME UP SCOTTY

### BAM! ENTERTAINMENT SNAPS UP ONE OF SCOTLAND'S BIGGEST DEVELOPERS

**Ailing publisher BAM! Entertainment has bought Scottish developer VIS Entertainment in a deal that is said to be worth around $7 million (nearly £4 million).** BAM! has already been threatened twice with being delisted from the NASDAQ stock exchange and it seems that this move is to try to stop this happening for a third time. In the past, BAM!'s portfolio hasn't exactly been overwhelming, with many games being based on TV and film licences (the action flop *Reign Of Fire* and various *Powerpuff Girls* games being notable examples).

"This is an exciting combination of two dynamic businesses whose activities and experience span the globe," said Raymond C. Musci, CEO of BAM!. "We believe this deal will position our combined businesses strongly in a highly competitive market." He could well be right, as BAM!'s shares have skyrocketed since the deal was announced.

While BAM!'s purchase is a relatively brave move, we're not sure if this will be enough to sustain the company. Although *State Of Emergency 2* has already been announced and is bound to do relatively well (thanks to sales of the first game) neither company's past catalogue has been filled with triple-A titles. Let's just hope that buying VIS will revitalise BAM! and not just prolong its otherwise inevitable closure.



**"THE VIRTUAL ON SERIES IS A VERY IMPORTANT BRAND FOR HITMAKER, AND I WOULD LIKE TO DEVELOP THE SERIES WITH AS MUCH CARE AND ATTENTION AS FEASIBLY POSSIBLE"**

*MIE KUMAGAI, PRESIDENT, HITMAKER*

## SEGA – HITMAKER

# MIE KUMAGAI

Gaming, for many reasons, is a predominantly male endeavour, so it's very refreshing to see a woman break into the higher echelons of the industry. Mie Kumagai has risen through the ranks of game production to become president of Hitmaker, one of SEGA's respected development houses. Joining the company in 1993, Kumagai-san worked on the *Virtua Tennis* series and *Virtual On Marz* before her appointment as Hitmaker president last year. And so far, things seem to be going well. "I have encountered no problems thus far – thanks to the staff around me who listen to my opinions, I am where I am now," Kumagai-san says.

It's already been a very busy time for the Hitmaker boss thanks to the studio's merger with SEGA Rosso and its collaboration with Treasure on the forthcoming Astroboy title *Tetsuwan Atom*. Developing these working relationships is something that Kumagai-san takes very seriously, from a business and a creative perspective. "We admire Treasure's 2D action games and we wanted to work with Treasure to develop a *Tetsuwan Atom* game right from the beginning," she says. "In addition, our games director at Hitmaker had wonderful ideas for the scenario. Therefore, if we could leave the action part to Treasure, we were sure that the finished product would be nothing but high quality. As for our recent merging with SEGA Rosso, we are more than happy about this. SEGA Rosso has many technologically gifted staff so it is good to be able to work with them. From now on, I would like to pour our energy in developing brands that SEGA Rosso has had as well."

In addition to maintaining popular franchises, Kumagai-san wants to ensure that her staff aren't adversely affected by the merger. "As we have become quite a big organisation, there is a fear that individual creators' opinions will not be heard as much as they once were," she says. "I intend to be aware of this danger and will continue to respect each creator's individuality and then continue to take the challenge of developing new games content full on."

Of course, this doesn't mean that Hitmaker's existing titles will suffer. Indeed, although arcade gaming seems to be in decline, Hitmaker's arcade titles such as *Derby Owners Club* and *Virtual On* are on the up – mostly thanks to some gameplay innovations. "Until recently, most versus games for arcade tended to pursue quick stimulation; using one coin to play and get the result quickly," Kumagai-san explains. "In developing these games, however, we positioned the element of collecting and growing things as an important system of game design. As a result, they were great successes." Another factor that's helped Hitmaker's success is the creation of dedicated Hitmaker arcades that are the ideal place for fans of *Virtual On* or *World Club Champion Football* to gather together to play and discuss games. "We thought that Japanese people were bad at communicating with strangers normally, especially in an arcade gaming situation, but that they would form a 'community' through games in arcades with a little encouragement," Kumagai-san says. "This indeed has happened as we expected and was a great achievement for us. I hope that communities such as these will grow bigger as *WCCF*, *Virtual On* or *Derby Owners Club* are more accepted by players in Europe and America."

A bizarre extension of Hitmaker's arcade activities is a surreal electric darts club (known as 'Bee') that's based in Tokyo's trendy Shibuya district. It was thought up by Hisao Oguchi, former Hitmaker president who's now president of SEGA. "He wanted to create what he calls a 'playground for grown-ups'," Kumagai-san explains. "He set his eyes on electric darts, which was beginning to find popularity in Japan." There are now plans to extend the Bee community by taking it online, as well as creating a PC version of *Derby Owners Club*. "We are sure to create games for both consumers and arcades, but we consider it very important to create network content as well," Kumagai-san says. "Hitmaker would like to provide content that is different from others; content that is developed from noticeably different concepts."

As if these plans weren't enough to keep Kumagai-san busy for a while, there's one other project she's keen to start work on as soon as possible. "To create games that can be enjoyed by women is one of the important tasks I have set myself," she says. "I have not yet seen this achieved within the industry so I have narrowed the themes down so as to personally achieve this task." And with all that she's done so far, it shouldn't be too difficult…




**IN THE MALE-DOMINATED GAMES INDUSTRY IT CAN BE RARE TO SEE A FEMALE FACE. BUT HITMAKER PRESIDENT MIE KUMAGAI IS PROVING THAT WOMEN CAN LAND TOP JOBS IN THE BUSINESS – AND BE RATHER GOOD AT THEM TOO**

# UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

BENEATH THE BUSINESSLIKE EXTERIOR OF THE AVERAGE PDA LIES A WORLD OF GAMING. WE LOOK AT THE SECRET WORLD OF THE ELECTRONIC ORGANISER…




**With the GBA being such a dominant force in the handheld market, you might be forgiven for assuming that there's little scope for any other format to be home to an exciting world of gaming.** But if you look beyond the spreadsheets, memos and fancy calendars long associated with the PDA (personal digital assistant) you'll be surprised by what you find. While no-one's been looking, the PDA has amassed a massive selection of games, many of them available for free for either operating system (Palm OS or Pocket PC). While some pale in comparison to what Nintendo's handheld has to offer, it's clear that the PDA is increasingly being seen as a viable games platform by big software publishers such as EA, Activision and Midway. With this in mind, and with the imminent UK launch of the first PDA games platform, we thought we'd take a peek at what PDA gaming has to offer.



Can you go from front-yard salesman to swanky magnate in *Lemonade Tycoon*?

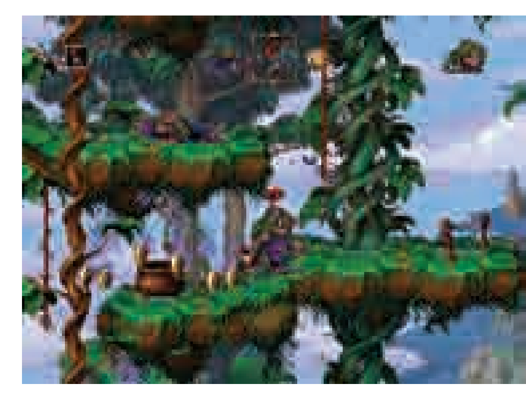
## STRATEGY AND RPGS

### TAKE OVER THE WORLD OR START A WHOLE NEW LIFE WITH YOUR PDA

**Your average PDA hasn't been designed with gaming in mind, so it favours certain genres.** Couple that with the fact that most PDA owners are likely to be a little older than GBA gamers and it's no surprise that there's a wealth of strategy and RPG games available. Those of you looking to tax your brains might fancy *Lemonade Tycoon* (www.hexacto.com, Palm and Pocket PC) – a popular business sim that challenges you to develop your humble lemonade stall into a fizzy empire. Budding property entrepreneurs should check out *Tower Mogul* (www.esoftinteractive.com, PPC) which asks you to build and manage a skyscraper. Though fairly gentle, both titles work well on the PDA and offer challenging and addictive experiences. The power-mad among us have much to choose from. *Warfare Incorporated* (www.handmark.com, Palm and PPC) is the current field leader, but *Age Of Empires* (www.ziointeractive.com, PPC) is also worth a look. Adventure fans should get *Fade* (www.fade-team.com, PPC), which is regarded as one of the best graphical adventures on the Pocket PC.

"THE CURRENT CROP OF PDAS ARE CAPABLE OF MORE THAN JUST SEDATE SIMS AND RETRO TITLES"

"AS PDAS HAVE INCREASED THEIR GRUNT, DEVELOPERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE IMPROVED POWER"



*Magic World* lets you sample some old-school-style 2D action on your PDA.

## ACTION ADVENTURE

### GO JUMPING, SHOOTING AND EXPLORING (BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE WORKING)

**It's no surprise that Lara Croft has already starred in her own PDA adventure; the fact that it was nearly two years ago should give a fair indication of how far PDA gaming has come.** Bearing a striking resemblance to the original PSone title, the action adventure genre has, unlike Ms. Croft, come on in leaps and bounds. As PDAs have increased their grunt, developers have been able to take advantage of the improved power. Games such as the first-person shooter *Master Thief* (www.cascatagames.com, Palm) or space-shooter *Anthelion* (www.pdamill.com, PPC) ably demonstrate that the PDA is capable of more than just sedate sims and retro games. Honourable mention must also go to 2D games, with award-winning titles such as the cartoony *Magic World* (www.palmsw.com, Palm) and *Rifle Slugs* (www.penreader.com, Palm) managing to impress. *Rifle Slugs*, which seems to owe much to *Worms*, is also notable because it uses the Bluetooth functionality commonly found on PDAs – this allows wireless multiplayer action, which will rapidly establish itself as a key feature of handheld gaming.

## FREE TO THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT

When there's a platform that can be programmed by someone in their bedroom, there will always be software produced and distributed for free. PDA freeware quality varies enormously from the stunning to the downright inept. These are a few of the games that have impressed us most…



### RICK DANGEROUS (PALM)

Though this is by no means perfect (the scrolling can leave a lot to be desired and controlling Rick can prove difficult), this is a great example of what the PDA is capable of. With a little refinement, *Rick Dangerous* could easily become one of the best PDA freeware titles available.




### LEMMINGS (PALM, WWW.ARDIRI.COM FOR LEVEL PACKS)

While GBA gamers pray for this classic to be released, PDA gamers can try to save the lives of those blue critters for free. It works perfectly with the stylus and though technically this is a demo (with extra levels available for $14.95) the ten levels here should be enough to convince you to pay for more.



### SUPERBOMBER (PPC)

'Borrowing' heavily from the *Bomberman* series, *Superbomber* combines all the classic action you remember complete with multiplayer support via the infrared port. As with many freeware titles, *Superbomber* is continually being updated to remove bugs and add features.



There's a wide range of racers available for the PDA, in 2D or a more modern style.

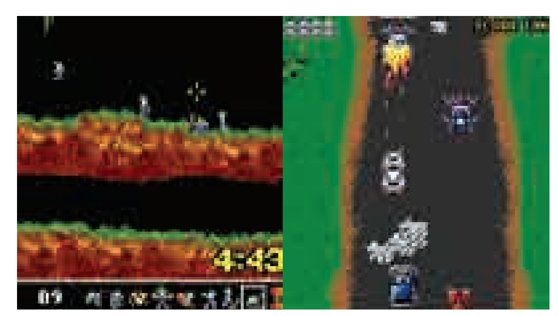
# SPORTS

## BECOME AN ACCOMPLISHED ALL-ROUNDER WITH FOOTBALL, GOLF AND DRIVING GAMES

**As with other genres, the world of sport is fairly well represented, but many titles are let down simply because there's a distinct lack of a D-pad on a PDA.** Nevertheless, EA has lent its support to the PDA games market with releases of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf* and *FIFA 2002* (www.zioninteractive.com, Palm and PPC). Of the two, it's the golf game that seems better suited to the format due to its slower pace and more simplistic controls. Driving games are also to be found by the score with *GTS Racing* (www.astraware.com, Palm and PPC) and *GeoPod* (www.fathammer.com, PPC) – a game clearly inspired by the PlayStation classic *Wipeout*. Both are great technical showcases for PDAs but are hampered by poor controls. Those in search of *Mario Kart*-style cartoon action should check out *Crazy Kart* (www.int13.net, PPC) – it might not eclipse Miyamoto's racer but it does offer a pretty decent alternative. However, it's the 2D titles that really impress. Stripped of fancy graphics, racers such as *Gangsta Race* (www.gargagames.com, PPC) and *Dreamway* (www.handyent.com, Palm) offer a distinctly retro feel with their top-down view and focus on fun. If you prefer two-wheeled action look no further than *Dougie Lampkin's Trial Challenge* (www.aimproductions.be, PPC) which offers gamers the chance to relive those *Kickstart* memories all over again as you try to get from one side of an assault course to the other without mishaps.

"THE WORLD OF SPORT IS FAIRLY WELL REPRESENTED BUT MANY TITLES ARE LET DOWN BECAUSE THERE'S A DISTINCT LACK OF A D-PAD ON A PDA"

"AS WITH ALL FREEWARE THE RESULTS CAN VARY, BUT IF YOU'RE PREPARED TO PAY THERE ARE SOME GREAT CLASSIC GAMES OUT THERE"



*Lemmings* and *SpyHunter* are just two of the classic titles to make you go misty-eyed.

# RETRO

## THE PDA IS IDEALLY SUITED TO PLAYING OLD-SCHOOL GAMES – HERE ARE THE BEST

**Those of you who prefer nostalgic gaming kicks will be pleased to know that virtually every classic game has been emulated, or at the very least been paid homage to.** A quick trawl through the freeware sites reveals a multitude of *Tetris* clones, *Breakout* wannabes and attempts to replicate games such as *Asteroids* and *Missile Command*. However, it's worth keeping your eye on such sites as some 'interpretations' can fall foul of the law (Nintendo has already cracked down on titles like *Maryo Bros* and *Donkie Kung*). Of course, as with all freeware, the results can vary enormously, but if you're prepared to pay for your fun there are some great classic games out there. Top of our list is the *SEGA Classics Pack* (www.palmone.com, Palm). For £16.47 you get four great SEGA games from the past. Unusually, this is not available to download but comes in the form of an expansion card, but the bonus here is that the games don't take up any of the precious space on your on-board memory. A good place to look for retro gaming is www.handmark.com. Apart from also being the source of official versions of popular board games, it also offers a pretty extensive range of classic Midway titles – the perfect antidote to *SpyHunter 2*. Elsewhere you can sample the perfectly recreated delights of *Lemmings* (www.ardiri.com, Palm) and the much-loved classic *Speedball II* (www.inifiniteventures.com, Palm) exceptionally cheaply or even for free.

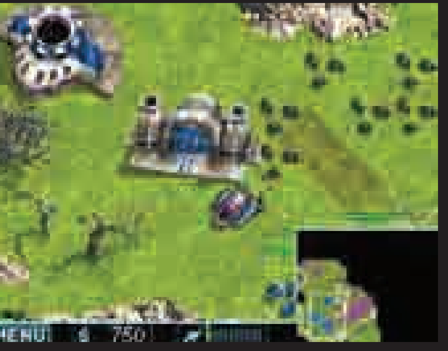
## IT'LL COST YA

Downloading software straight into your PDA from the internet is standard practice, and for software publishers this is a cost-effective way of selling games. This is reflected in the price of PDA games and there are stacks of new and classic titles on offer.



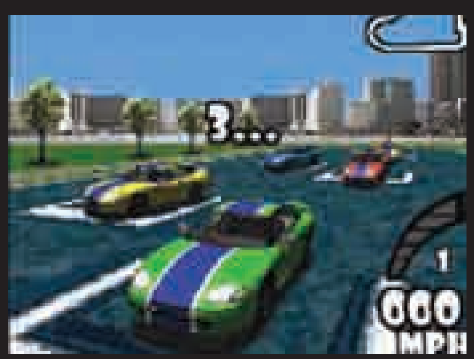
### SPEEDBALL II ($19.99, PPC)

This futuristic sports game has always been a firm favourite. The fact that they've somehow managed to cram a perfectly playable version of it onto a Pocket PC is testament to the versatility and power of today's PDAs.




### WARFARE INCORPORATED ($29.99, PALM + PPC)

Resource management and war go hand-in-hand in this *Command & Conquer*-style RTS from Handmark. Though a little pricey, great graphics and depth of gameplay are combined to make for a stunning strategy title.




### GTS RACING CHALLENGE ($17.95, PALM + PPC)

It suffers slightly in the control department, but *GTS Racing Challenge* still impresses with its cracking 3D graphics and smoothness of play. With a few more cars and tracks this could easily rival many racers on the GBA.

# The **secret life** of your boss' best friend

**The PDA has been around for a while in a variety of forms, and is still evolving to incorporate new features…**

## Past

The PDA as we know it started life as a PIM (personal information manager). Apple released the first PDA – the Newton – in 1993, and by today's standards the early machines were pretty basic, offering simple diary and address-book functions. But even these underpowered, monochrome-screened organisers were home to text-based role-playing games, chess tutors and a slew of *Tetris* clones.

## Present

For under £300 you can get a PDA with a super-speedy Intel Xscale 400Mhz processor, 64Mb of built-in RAM and a 320 x 480 high-resolution screen capable of displaying 65,536 colours. Support for games is huge, and with the imminent UK launch of the Tapwave Zodiac – the world's first tailor-made gaming PDA – it seems PDA gaming is finally being taken seriously by users and games developers alike.

## Future

The demand for handheld multimedia devices is likely to grow, and with publishers like Activision and SEGA supporting the Zodiac, the future for PDA gaming looks promising. Interestingly, the next generation of handhelds may look to the PDA for inspiration, and if Sony or Nintendo are to attract the attention of style-conscious technophiles, 'PDA-lite' functionality may be on the cards.

# The **Age** of Aquarius




**Despite spending four pages telling you about the marvels of PDA gaming, we're not advocating that you rush out and grab one with the sole intention of playing games.** And with good reason. The truth is that until recently the gaming side of the PDA was viewed as a minor distraction from the core functions of the device – a fact made obvious by the styling of your average PDA.

Our major gripe is that the PDA is simply not geared towards playing games in the way that any other gaming device is. However, it certainly has the performance capabilities, and the number of independent developers creating games for the platform is testament to the fact that the demand is there.

But all that's about to change. Already launched in the US, the Zodiac is the first PDA that actively supports gaming as well as the more traditional aspects of personal organisers. Billed as 'the next best thing in handheld entertainment', the Zodiac has won the support of the US gaming press and is going to be launched in the UK later this year. It features Palm OS software, high specifications and, most importantly, it's been designed with gaming in mind. This means developers can create the kind of games that can actually be played in a way that most of us take for granted.

For PDA owners who love gaming this is a tantalising prospect. But the likelihood of this device impressing gamers is slim, as the launch of the PSP looks set to dominate the handheld market, which would be a pity. However, demand for the Zodiac among existing PDA users is going to be high, and as a pointer to the future of handhelds the Zodiac could be the template that other, more established, handheld manufacturers adopt.



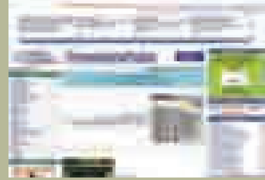
Big-name developers have already pledged their support for the Zodiac Tapwave – the future of handheld gaming?



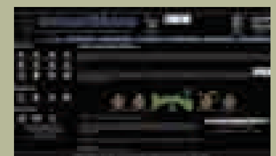


## Top Five **Websites**

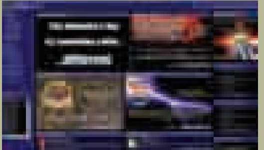
**Looking to put some fun in your pocket? Here are the best places to find it.**



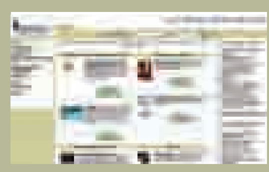
**www.freewareppc.com**
**www.freewarepalm.com**
**Possibly the best source of PDA freeware.**



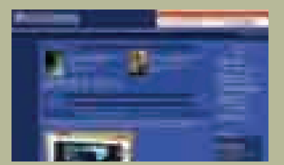
**www.ardiri.com**
**Worth checking out for *Lemmings* and some letters from Nintendo…**



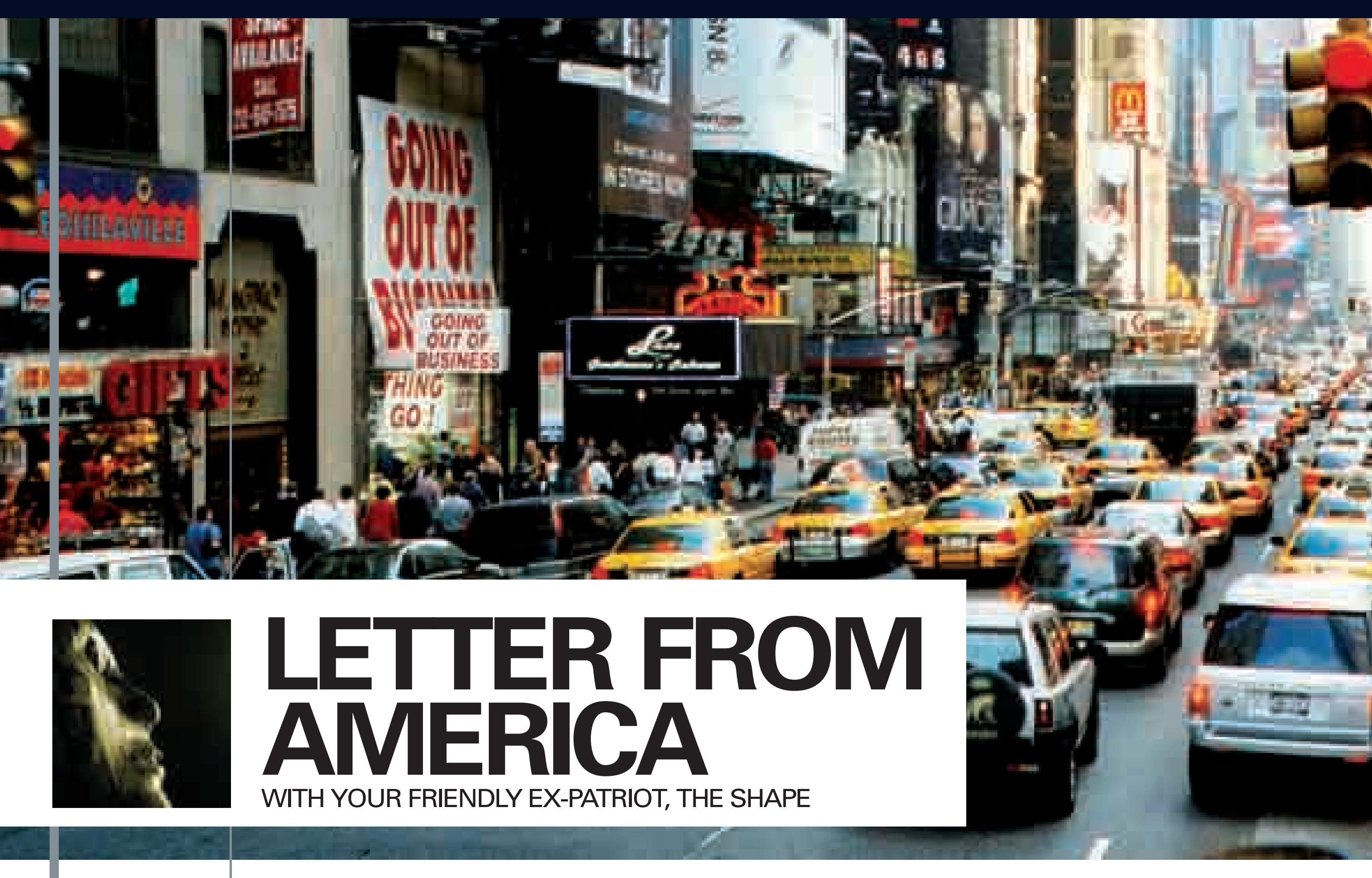
**www.astraware.com**
**A great site offering a large variety of the latest games for your PDA.**



**www.handango.com/uk**
**A comprehensive site that's tailored for UK PDA owners. Well worth a look.**



**www.pocketmatrix.com**
**There are links to games sites but this is also a useful site for the latest PDA info.**




# LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

**"THERE ARE NOW MORE ESSENTIAL GAMES THAN THERE ARE HOURS TO DESPERATE I'VE HAD TO ADOPT A SET OF RULES WHILE MUST-HAVE**

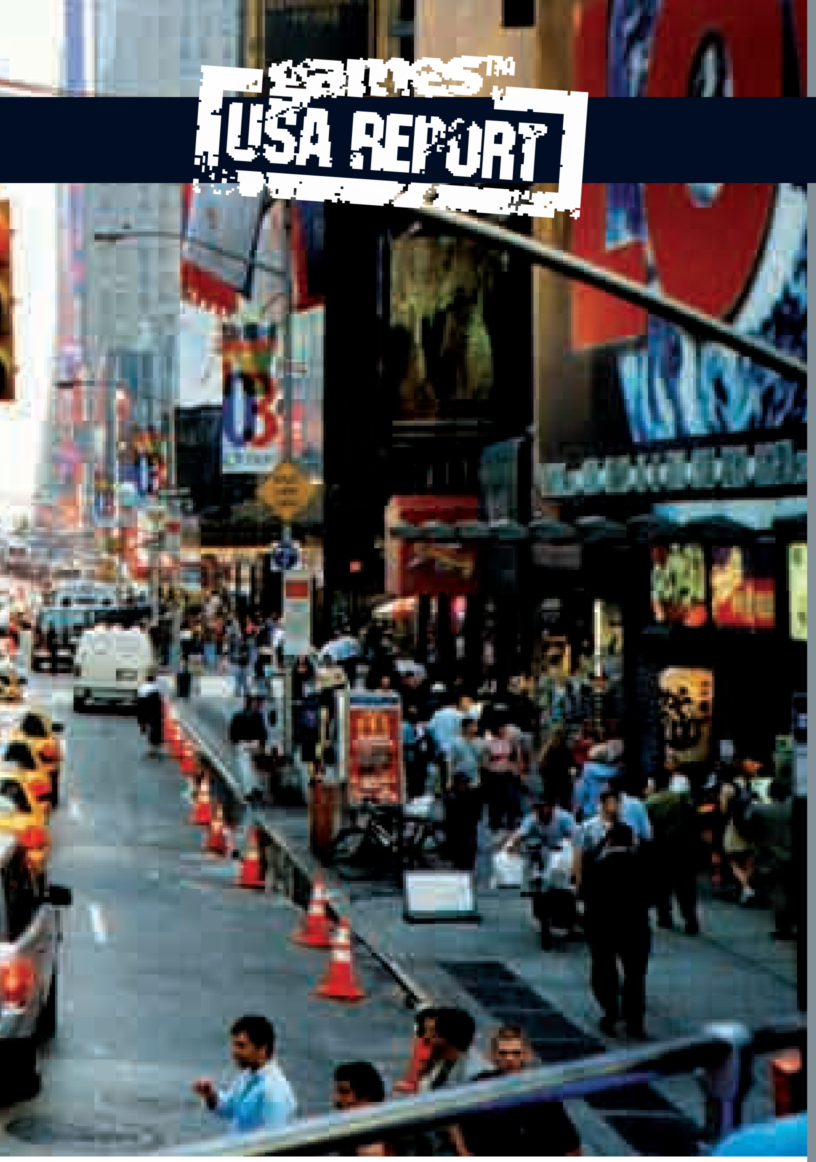
**My favourite store always has something for me these days.** Shakespeare's is an independent games retailer in a nearby mall and it has a nice collection of weird relics, as well as girls on full-size *DDR* machines who've never heard of sports bras. What I'm saying is, it's always worth stopping by. And not just for the yabbos, or the retro consoles undergoing live surgery on the counter. It's down to the American release schedule.

An assertion is creeping into current parlance that we are now experiencing 'a golden age of gaming'. It's popping up everywhere, just like the phrase 'casual gamer' did before, or the sequels backlash before that. I don't know about the rest of the world – we're good at ignoring that here – but from my perspective in the US, with the torrent of top-flight releases hitting us week after week, I am inclined to agree about the 'golden age' thing. We are under constant bombardment by great software. The only memory I have of anything similar was during the Amiga's heyday in the early Nineties, admittedly a period I've romanticised so much I can no longer trust my own recollection. I do know that there were entire 12-month stretches in the life of the PlayStation that were free of any high points at all, save for highly original Japanese fare that inevitably proved too original for Western publishers. I can also see, with absolute clarity, that there were precisely four great games on the N64. Can you ponder how much bad money you spent in the 32- and 64-bit years and not wince? Sound reasons why this hail storm of triple-A product is special, welcome and deserved.

■ Look, look at it tempting you with its shiny new ways. But it's not yours until you've finished that pile of games behind you…

The gold rush was augmented here with both *Prince Of Persia* and *Beyond Good & Evil* – two of the season's best – being available from day one on all three consoles, whereas I hear some demonic pact meant these were PS2-exclusive until this year back in Blighty. The month of March alone sees us getting a proper version of *Mafia* (January's PS2 version is best forgotten), *Breakdown*, two flavours of *Steel Battalion*, *Pandora Tomorrow*, *Ninja Gaiden* and *Final Fantasy XI* with the hard drive. In one month. These are no meaningless motocross diversions or emotionally dead Bond money spinners. If *Thief III* survives Ion Storm's recent boat-rocking reorientation of the series, it will be the perfect crown on a new era when it arrives in May.

There are now more essential games than there are hours to play them. Things have got so desperate I've had to adopt a set of rules while must-have software piles up around me. Something as leisurely as games playing is generally best without any rules, of course, but it's simply become necessary to avoid being swamped. (Though this is a pleasant



## PLAY THEM. THINGS HAVE GOT SO SOFTWARE PILES UP AROUND ME"

inconvenience.) The restrictions I've placed on myself are not complicated: one game must be finished before another can be begun. While completing one game, the purchase of new software is still permitted, and actually helps a great deal. You soon find the motivation to finish that stubborn one you abandoned at 85 per cent complete when Shiny New Game X lies nearby, still sealed, quietly tempting you with its way-cool jacket design and posed screenshots. Before I was doing this, I'd see less than a quarter of what any game had to offer because by that point something new had shown up. No era is excluded – you can go back and clean up that lingering *Banjo-Kazooie* save in order to earn a new game slot – but if you try to count some 30-minute tosh on the NES, you know you're just cheating yourself. Your mum wouldn't be proud, and neither would I.

Is it geeky, this thing I've done? I hope so. At least it keeps me so busy getting the most out of my collection that it helps avoid round-the-clock election coverage, which has been in effect for three months, EVEN THOUGH THE ELECTION ISN'T UNTIL NOVEMBER. Ahem. Anyway, back to winding up *PGR2* – Golds and Platinums only, mofo – so that I may soon set out for unarmed, undeserving opponents in *Cabela's Dangerous Hunts*. If someone would tell me how to do that endless powerslide 360° combo thing I'd be very grateful. Anyone?

Many thanks




### MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

Reserve



### LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Butterfinger




WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY

# AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

## PRESIDENTS' DAY



Furniture and automobile businesses pretend to offer you big savings, flaunting their products in front of massive Stars-and-Stripes backdrops. The History Channel does two hours on the assassination of Lincoln. A few people get the day off work.

## US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

| | Title | Publisher | Format |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles | Nintendo | GC |
| 2 | Champions Of Norrath | SOE | PS2 |
| 3 | Metroid: Zero Mission | Nintendo | GBA |
| 4 | Unreal II: The Awakening | Atari | Multi |
| 5 | NFL Street | EA Sports | Multi |
| 6 | Mafia | Take 2 | Multi |
| 7 | Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship | Konami | GBA |
| 8 | Need For Speed: Underground | EA Games | Multi |
| 9 | Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II | Interplay | Multi |
| 10 | Mario Kart: Double Dash!! | Nintendo | GC |



FF: Crystal Chronicles

Unreal II

games™ JAPAN REPORT

# KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TIM ROGERS

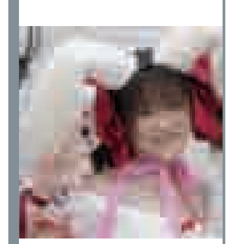
"I HAD TIDUS PANTS ON MY MIND WHEN WE SAW THE COSPLAYERS. DOZEN TIDUSES AND NOT ONE OF THEM WAS WEARING THE

**Did you know they sell exact replicas of the pants Tidus wears in *Final Fantasy X* for around ¥150 in certain obsessive stores in Tokyo?** Well, you do now. I'd known for some time when I decided to track these pants down for the purpose of a column just for you. I wanted to write something poetic and simple about those pants, and I decided the best thing I could do was find them for myself, maybe hold them in my hands, and then come to some kind of cosmic conclusion. But I couldn't do this. Nowhere I went had the pants in stock. Furthermore, most store owners looked at me like I was crazy.

So it was in the name of journalism that my colleague Chuck Franklin and I went on a quest to find the pants – or, more specifically, someone wearing the pants. The pants are paraphernalia of 'kosupure' – 'cosplay', short for 'costume play' like Pokémon is short for Pocket Monster – which is a favourite hobby of many Japanese who like their games or anime more than too much. Chuck and I have been hitting places full of cosplayers. I had the pants on my mind when we surveyed the cosplayers at the Tokyo Game Show last year. There must have been a dozen Tiduses and not a one of them was wearing the Official Tidus Pants™. We know this because we asked more than half of them. "I made these on my own," one rough, tanned Tidus told us; a Tidus that turned out to be a girl, and she was as proud of her hand-made pants as a guy would be of his new bench-press record.

At the Tokyo Anime Expo in January, we only saw two Tiduses and one of them was dressed up like the *Final Fantasy X-2* Tidus, who Chuck assures me is 'different'. The other Tidus was an American and his costume was, frankly, something of a joke. It looked like he'd bought it at a department store. Chuck and I got tired of searching for the pants and instead played the new *Ghost In The Shell: Standalone Complex* game on PlayStation2, which is really good. Really.

On the third day of the show, still looking for the Tidus Pants, we saw something curious and it's actually the point of this column to describe it. Downstairs at the Cosplay Dance Party, near the changing room, we saw a Japanese man and a Japanese woman dressed up elaborately and instantly recognisably as Locke and Tina from *Final Fantasy VI*. Seriously, the level of detail on their costumes made me believe they must have been preparing to shoot a scene in a finally-to-be-filmed movie adaptation of *Final Fantasy VI*. I got out my camera, thinking I'd snap a good photo. This was when a Japanese man in a blazer and khakis pushed his way in front of me. "No, no – you take photo upstairs," he said. Upstairs, of course, was the Cosplay Photo Shoot Area, the only part of the show floor where



This is Yunmao the bunny girl. That's just her cosplay name, though. I know her real one…



The sign under this one read 'No smoking'. But this sign is more important to the column.

# TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

## LESSON SEVENTEEN: COSPLAY CHAT-UP LINES

| | |
|---|---|
| Eeee, kimi kawaii desu yo | Hey, you're cute |
| Aa, anou, arigatou | Um, uh, thanks |
| Nan no geemu no kosupure desu ka? | Which game character are you cosplaying? |
| Anou, jitsu wa… kore wa gakkou no seifuku desukedo | Well, actually… this is kind of my school uniform |
| Aa. Doko no gakko desu ka? | Oh. Where do you go to school? |

## THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A OFFICIAL TIDUS PANTS™"

you're allowed to take photos of cosplayers, even for the press. This guy lined up the two cosplayers, who posed half-dramatically, and I took a picture of them before the guy then asked us, "You have anything to say?". I said, in Japanese, to Locke: "Your costumes are great." The blazer guy repeated the same thing to Locke, in Japanese. Locke didn't look at me once. After two more lines of needless dialogue, the guy in the blazer gave me his business card and led the cosplayers off.

"What was up with that?" said Chuck.

"I… guess they're professionals," I said.

"But what was with their attitudes?" Chuck asked.

"I don't know," I said, "They're the ones who spent hundreds of thousands of yen to dress up as videogame characters."

Here, Chuck could have pointed out that they, as cosplayers, have an agent, and I, as a novelist, do not. Or he could have pointed out that I needed a shave.

Kind regards






These smug weirdos have an agent to wholly support their habit and translate Japanese into Japanese for them.

## RABBIT, RABBIT

During the Anime Expo we ate a slice of bread at the Cosplay Café so I could get my picture taken with the Bunny Girl waitress. In order to take a picture of the waitress you need to buy something.

They run a Cosplay Café in Akihabara called Cure Maid Café which is full of guys in their forties with bags full of resin model kits. I've never eaten there. Every time Chuck and I ride the elevator up, we end up just standing there, looking in, before pressing the button for the first floor again. Last week, I had dinner with that Bunny Girl waitress. She wasn't a bunny at that point, though this was not at all disappointing. She's a funny, lovely girl who's about to start a programming job at a Certain Big Videogame Company.

We talked about the owner of the Cure Maid Café – a mysterious woman in her mid-forties who always wears black – and how strict she is about her employees' costumes; "Like a military drill sergeant in the movies," as Bunny Girl put it.

I asked Bunny Girl why she started cosplaying in the first place, and she simply said: "Because it's fun to wear fun clothes and be someone else."

## JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

| | Title | Publisher | Format |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Winning Eleven 7 International | Konami | PS2 |
| 2 | SD Gundam G Generation Seed | Bandai | PS2 |
| 3 | Sengoku Musou | Koei | PS2 |
| 4 | Final Fantasy X-2 International | Square Enix | PS2 |
| 5 | Pokémon Fire Red | Nintendo | GBA |
| 6 | Famicom Mini: Super Mario Bros. | Nintendo | GBA |
| 7 | Shadow Hearts II | Aruze | PS2 |
| 8 | Pokémon Leaf Green | Nintendo | GBA |
| 9 | Dragon Ball Z 2 | Bandai | PS2 |
| 10 | Gallop Racer Lucky 7 | Tecmo | PS2 |







**FROM SOFTWARE TO HARDWARE, ASTEROIDS TO MAX PAYNE – RICHARD HUDDY'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH GAMING IS AS LONG-STANDING AS IT IS DIVERSE. AND AS HEAD OF EUROPEAN DEVELOPER RELATIONS FOR ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST GRAPHICS-CHIP COMPANIES, HE'S SHARING HIS PASSION WITH OTHERS…**




"IN ABOUT TEN YEARS TIME WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FOOL USERS INTO THINKING THAT WHAT THEY'RE SEEING IS GENUINELY REAL, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LOOK AND WHAT THEY DO"

*RICHARD HUDDY, HEAD OF EUROPEAN DEVELOPER RELATIONS, ATI*

## ATI TECHNOLOGIES LTD

# RICHARD HUDDY

**In just two decades, our expectations of videogames have changed immeasurably.** Where we were once happy to munch our way around simple mazes or mindlessly shoot blocky aliens, we now expect our games to have a little more depth – visually and otherwise. And that's where ATI's Richard Huddy can help. The head of European developer relations for the graphics-chip giant has spent the last two years working with software houses to ensure they get to grips with the latest technology, thereby enabling programmers and artists to come up with some great-looking games.

Huddy's fixation with titles like *Asteroids*, *Space Invaders* and *Galaxians* prompted him to join the industry so he could make his own games. By the early Nineties he was into 3D rendering and worked with Criterion on its initial version of RenderWare. Spells at RenderMorphics, 3DLabs and NVIDIA followed before Huddy joined ATI, and although the industry has moved on, he's still enthusiastic. "When I started working in 3D there were around 20 companies trying to build 3D graphics hardware, and the best could run fast enough to fill an 'astounding' ten million pixels per second," he says. "Since then, all but three of the makers of chips have disappeared… and current high-end chips are almost a thousand times faster. The technology is every bit as exciting to me now as it was in those early days, and many times more complex."

The fact that so many hardware developers have fallen by the wayside is testament to the rising cost of innovation in gaming, and now it's left to ATI, NVIDIA and Intel to slug it out. Intel is currently the number-one company, but ATI may have a few aces up its sleeve in the shape of the new consoles from Nintendo and Microsoft. The company has already worked closely with Nintendo on the GameCube and will contribute to the N5 project. And after Microsoft's falling-out with NVIDIA, ATI was there to pick up the pieces. But actually finding out about these new ventures is rather difficult. "ATI is deeply involved with future generations of console products from both Nintendo and Microsoft," Huddy says. "That creates a position where it is impossible for me to comment on this type of product at all." Oh. Right. Well, what about Xbox 2? "What's that?" Huddy asks. "I know that last summer ATI signed an agreement with Microsoft to develop future Xbox technologies, but I'm not able to say more than that."

While he's sworn to secrecy about ATI's console projects, Huddy is more open about where PC gaming is heading. And it sounds very promising. If Huddy's predictions are right, the next time we step into a game world it should be almost indistinguishable from the one we leave behind. "The simplified shortlist of new features which we should see arriving in the next generation of games are better water, metal, fur, hair, fire, smoke, fog and mist," he explains. "These are all the kinds of things that make reality interesting."

In the meantime, however, it looks like Huddy's team will continue to make new technology as pain-free as possible. After all, developers want an easy life, just like the rest of us. "There are relatively few things that games developers want from their development system," Huddy says. "The top of their list is stability. If they have a machine with exciting technology but which crashes several times a day then they'll unplug that 'advanced technology' and put in something that works instead. Second on the list… is technology that's fun for them to play with. They like experimenting with new techniques and they like amazing their artists with what can be done."

Having fun at work isn't a concept that's lost on Huddy, and when he's not pushing chips he pops up as the 'mad scientist' in *Max Payne*. "It didn't take a great deal of training," Huddy says. "Most times you see me I'm lying dead on the floor having just been shot to pieces by the bad guys – and I don't need much training for that kind of role." But even if the acting roles dry up, it sounds like Huddy will be happy to stick to the day job. Whatever happens with the gaming market over the next few years, Huddy simply says: "I hope that I'll still be involved in spreading the message about technology, because I find it really exciting and stimulating." And with enthusiasm like that, it looks like we'll hear him loud and clear.

# COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** VISITS A DIFFERENT DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH WE GO FOR A KICKABOUT WITH SPORTS INTERACTIVE.

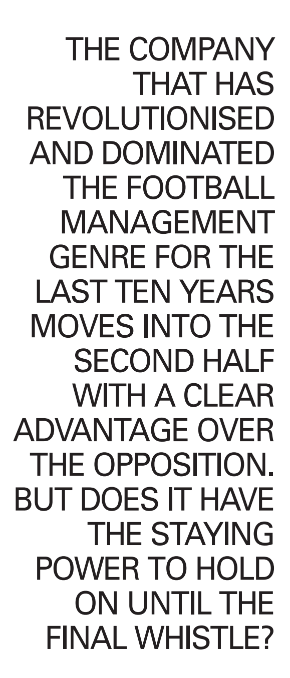












THE COMPANY THAT HAS REVOLUTIONISED AND DOMINATED THE FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT GENRE FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS MOVES INTO THE SECOND HALF WITH A CLEAR ADVANTAGE OVER THE OPPOSITION. BUT DOES IT HAVE THE STAYING POWER TO HOLD ON UNTIL THE FINAL WHISTLE?

# SPORTS INTERACTIVE

**If there's ever been proof that sticking to what you're good at is a recipe for success, it'd be Sports Interactive.** Based in North London, the developer has managed to hit the top of the games charts time and time again over the last decade, despite only creating one game. *Championship Manager* has proved to be the definitive football management sim, and with every seasonal update it seems to get better. More features, stats and even a new game engine every now and then have enhanced the 1992 original on a regular basis. But having spent the last decade creating titles focused purely on a single idea, you'd have thought that the company might have tired of football by now…

"I could never be bored of football," says Paul Collyer, co-chairman and, along with his brother Oliver, one of the founding members of SI. "Sure, there are things that infuriate me – I'm an Everton fan for starters – but it really is, after my family, the most important thing in my life." There's certainly no denying the company's success with its football titles, but evolution is a natural part of any business and as such, even a company as single-minded as Sports Interactive has to start exploring other avenues eventually. One new sporting option has already been announced – *Eastside Hockey Manager*. By combining the backbone of *Champ Manager* with a hockey management sim programmed by student Risto Remes, the firm hopes to have another hit franchise on its hands. Remes has been signed up to work on the project and, luckily, has the same passion for sports as the SI team. "Risto Remes feels the same about hockey as I do about football," says Paul Collyer.

There may be ideas for expansion into other sports in the pipeline, but it sounds like SI doesn't want to stray too far from what it knows best. "We're looking at a number of different sports at the moment," says Miles Jacobson, managing director of SI, "but we believe in organic growth, so it will be a slow but sure approach. The football world is changing the whole time… and

Based in North London, Sports Interactive has just two dozen staff on its books. The company was founded by brothers Paul and Oliver Collyer.





Work is underway on two titles at the moment – *Football Manager 2005* and *Eastside Hockey Manager*. Both games will be management sims along the lines of *Champ Manager*..





there are still so many things that we want to do with our *Football Manager*." Of course, it's those key words – Football Manager – that currently have football management game fans buzzing like so many excitable bees. With the *Championship Manager* franchise clearly being the market leader, it was something of a shock for the fans to see SI sever its ties with publisher Eidos, although the fact that the split left the developer with everything bar the name was at least some consolation. "It was an amicable split and as much a growing apart as anything else," says Collyer. "We have our own plans for the next few years and they don't fit with Eidos' visions, but we both respect each others' values. Eidos always gave us creative control anyway and at the end of the day, we see ourselves as a very independent dev team."

After the loss of the *Championship Manager* brand, it wasn't too long before the company bounced back with the announcement of a new project. Short of guessing the revised name, though (which was bought from Prism Leisure, which published the first *Football Manager* game on the Spectrum back in 1982), the outcome was hardly a shock. A football management game from the developer that has dominated the genre for the last decade? You could have seen it coming a mile off. That said, the fact that the *Championship Manager* brand is so strong means that SI has effectively created its own competition; something that immediately poses a threat as far as making *Football Manager* a success goes. "Up to a point, it's a gamble," admits Collyer, "but it's also a challenge and we have the utmost confidence in our ability. Of course, all dev teams make mistakes and we've made our own along the way, but at the end of the day we own the best database and an amazing codebase to make a management game with. *Championship Manager* is a huge name and we accept there will be people who follow the name rather than the developer, but if we have learnt anything from the last few years it's that quality sells in the end."

And it's this quality that SI has clearly prided itself on all these years, despite obvious pressure from other sources to get its products out the door as quickly as possible. "I don't really care what people outside think about Sports Interactive as long as we're happy with what we're doing and the company is doing itself justice," says Paul Collyer, and the company is clearly determined to make the best games possible. Its last title – *Championship Manager Season 03/04* – was a resounding success with the fans, following the many problems that *Championship Manager 4* had, clearly demonstrating SI's desire to get everything right. This makes the thought of *Football Manager* all the more appealing as it will be primarily based on the *03/04* codebase. However, the aim of *Football Manager* isn't just a cheap ploy to lure fans of Eidos' title away but to build SI's reputation on a worldwide level. "We want to



**"WE LOOK FORWARD TO BEING FRIENDLY RIVALS WITH EIDOS FOR MANY YEARS TO COME IN THE SPORTS MANAGEMENT MARKET"**

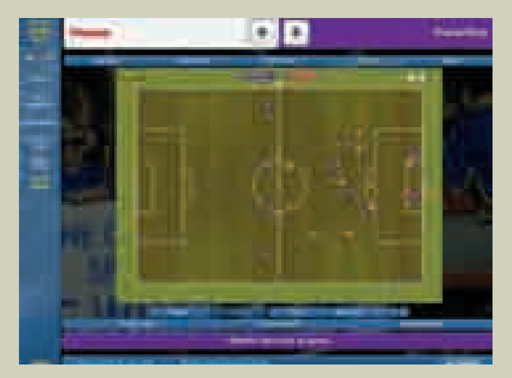
**MILES JACOBSON, SPORTS INTERACTIVE**

# WORLD OF SPORT

**If you're going to create videogames, they might as well focus on a subject you're passionate about. Looking at Sports Interactive's softography, we reckon its staff might be football fans. But we're just guessing…**

## CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER
(MULTI, 1992-2003)

A series spanning 11 years, five formats (from Amiga and Atari ST to PC, Mac and Xbox) and 12 instalments, *Championship Manager* is a huge franchise with hundreds of thousands of fans. And to think EA turned down the chance to publish it…



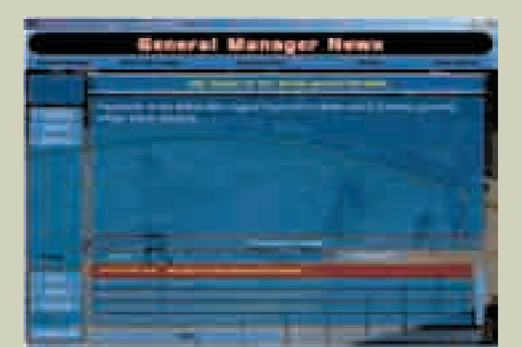
## CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER QUIZ
(PC/PSONE, 1999)

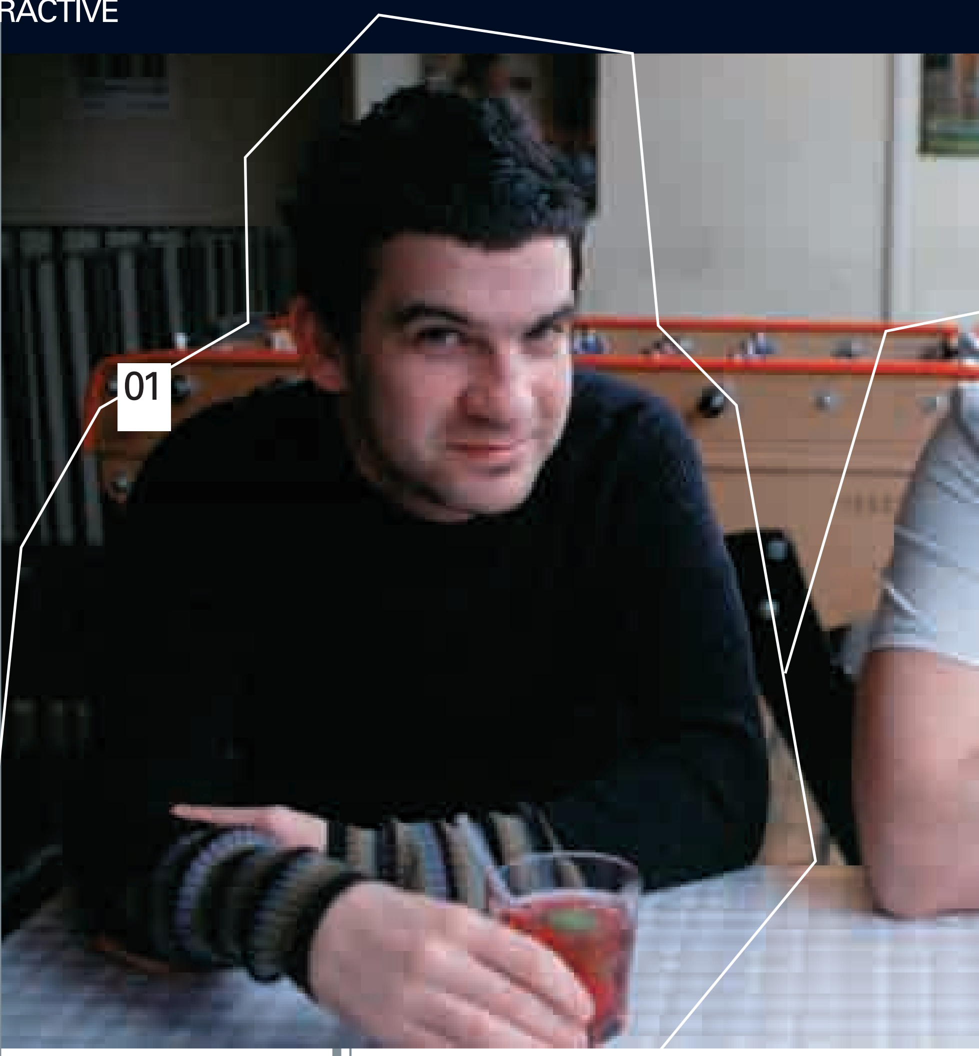
Appearing as Sports Interactive's first attempt at releasing a console title, *Championship Manager Quiz* was also SI's first non-management title since the company began. With over 11,000 questions on offer, it was really one for die-hard football fanatics and series enthusiasts only.



## EASTSIDE HOCKEY MANAGER
(PC, 2004)

SI's latest project sees a move into the world of ice hockey. The idea didn't originate from within SI – the game was originally coded by a hockey-mad student, who was promptly hired by the company to work on a bigger and better version of the game.




**1 MILES JACOBSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, SPORTS INTERACTIVE**

**IN A NUTSHELL:** Became involved with Sports Interactive on a part-time basis during the development of *Championship Manager 2*, before joining the company full-time a few years ago. Has also worked in the music industry and been involved with numerous game soundtracks. Supports: Watford, for his sins.

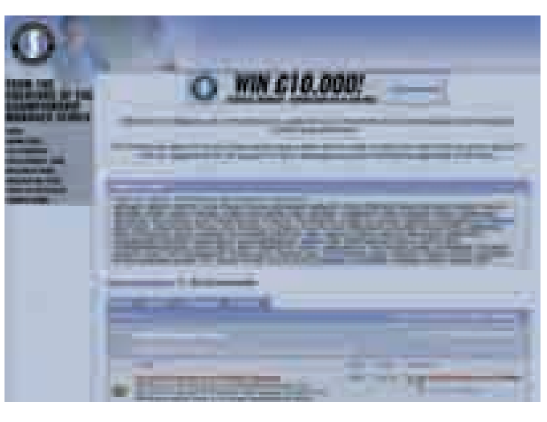
**2 PAUL COLLYER, CO-CHAIRMAN, SPORTS INTERACTIVE**

**IN A NUTSHELL:** Worked on *Championship Manager* with his brother Oliver since before Sports Interactive was born. Started creating his first management game in 1985, then went on to co-found SI with Oliver where remains to this day. Supports: Everton, with a passion.

increase our sales base on a global level, so we aren't resting on our laurels by just targeting players of our old games," insists Jacobson. With *Football Manager* being the company's first worldwide release after its previous Europe-only launches, SI needs to appeal to a market outside its established loyal fans, and the decision to team up with SEGA was more than just a need to find another publisher. "I would like to think that we also know our customer pretty well," says Jacobson, "and the fact that SI has won marketing awards shows that we were involved with that side of things as well. SEGA are also great marketers – just look at the Sonic advert on TV and that went straight to the top of the charts – so that side of things doesn't really worry me. What is important is that we're able to deliver a great game that has people talking about it and spreading the word, and that's what we're aiming to do."

Thanks to the ready-made and intelligent fanbase that SI has built up over the years, it's only to be expected that *Football Manager* is likely to be a success when it finally arrives late this year. With developer awareness being high among the current flock of *Championship Manager* fans, the chances of them changing brands to stay with SI is pretty high. However, SI's current plans for world domination of the football management market place a massive expectation at the game's feet, particularly given the company's size – it currently consists of just 24 people (having expanded from an even smaller


02



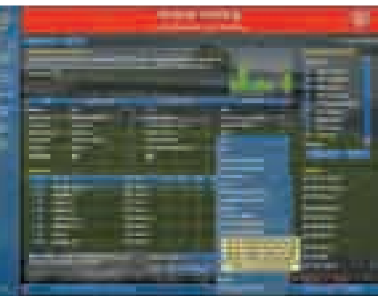
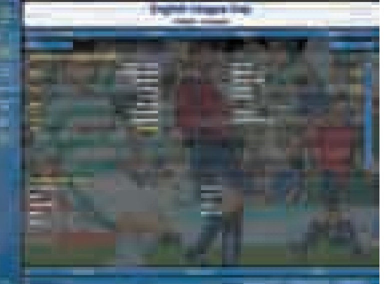
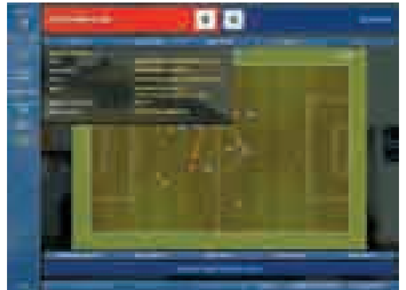

## CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Through *Championship Manager*'s links to Sports Interactive's official website, various web forums and other internet resources, SI has managed to build up quite a following of fans around the world, many of whom have been more than willing to share their views on the progress of the series. "The proudest achievement for me is our web community," says Jacobson. "It's great to have a place where the fans of our games can come and talk to us on a regular basis – especially since the whole SI team can get involved, as it gets us much closer to the users of our games." It's this attitude that's also led to the £10,000 *Football Manager* logo contest that's currently being run by the company. Not only do the fans get the chance to submit a design for what they'd like to see as the logo for the new game, but they then get to vote on the winning design once Sports Interactive has whittled it down to a final selection. "It's as much [the community's] game as it is ours," Jacobson says, "so they get a say in what the logo is." To enter the contest, check out www.sigames.com for more details.



"CHAMP MANAGER 4 WASN'T WHAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN – IT WASN'T FUN TO READ THE CRITICISM AND KNOW A LOT OF IT WAS JUSTIFIED"

PAUL COLLYER, SPORTS INTERACTIVE

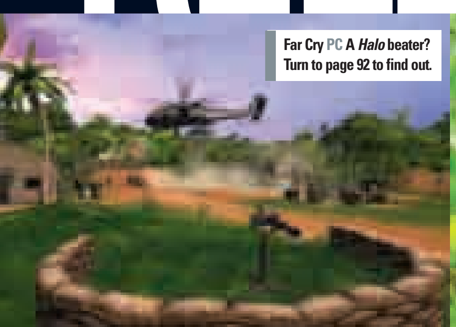
team several years ago). The success of *Champ Manager* has helped to see the firm through the hardships faced by so many other small British developers in recent years, although Jacobson himself admits that "it's probably not been as easy as people think. We're not flash and we reinvest the royalties into the business, so maybe that's why we seem more stable to outsiders." However, SI certainly isn't comparable to the might of a company like EA that can release worldwide and absorb any loss without worry. As much of a burden as this might seem, though, it's also more proof that SI is less worried about the price of failure and more focused on not compromising its principles in the name of quality.

"I believe strongly that small teams make better games," says Collyer. "We've never subscribed to the 'throw people at a problem' theory that's popular in some quarters of the games industry and we've expanded as and when we needed to. I can't pretend that as games become bigger, each will require more people to keep the development time down to a sensible level, but you have to have a devoted team who live and breathe the game you are working on. We also have thousands of very vocal and loyal fans out there – they won't allow our standards to slip, as we discovered after the release of *CM4*. But when it comes to the atmosphere at SI, I consider most of the lads there to be my friends and that makes being involved all the more enjoyable." This is a sentiment that's echoed by Miles Jacobson. "When we're looking for people to join the team, it's imperative that they'll be able to fit in and bring in complementary skills," he says. "SI isn't just a place of work – it's a team."

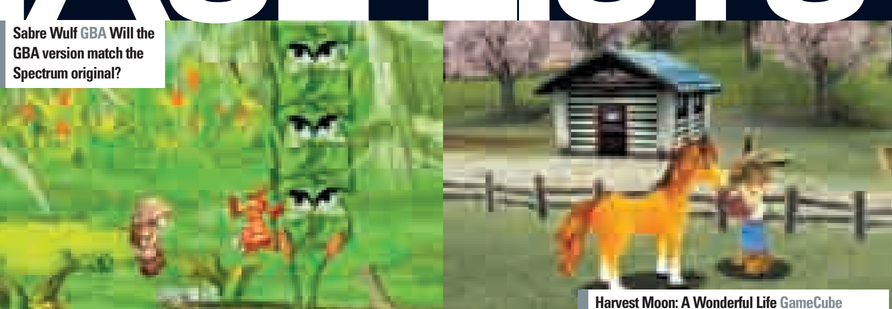
After its high-profile parting from publisher Eidos, Sports Interactive got to keep the *Champ Manager* game engine while Eidos got the brand name.



# RELEASE LISTS



Far Cry PC A *Halo* beater? Turn to page 92 to find out.



Sabre Wulf GBA Will the GBA version match the Spectrum original?

Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life GameCube Fingers crossed that this doesn't slip any further…



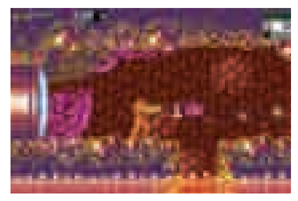


## MOST PLAYED

### METROID: ZERO MISSION

**Format:** Game Boy Advance
**Publisher:** Nintendo

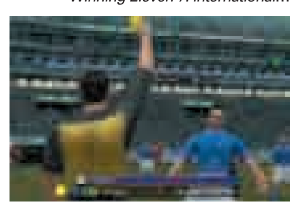
It may be incredibly short, but that means we can just keep on completing it. After ploughing through epics like *Fire Emblem* and *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance*, it's refreshing to play something so lean. Samus has proved a worthy character for Nintendo to resurrect – now we just want *Metroid Prime 2*.



### PRO EVO 3

**Format:** PlayStation2
**Publisher:** Konami

Konami's excellent soccer title is the game that keeps on giving. Even now we're discovering new tactics and moves, and the gameplay is as good as it ever was. Lunchtime duels have once again become a part of working life and we still can't get over how good Heskey actually is. Roll on *Winning Eleven 7: International…*



### CABELA'S DANGEROUS HUNTS

**Format:** Xbox
**Publisher:** Activision

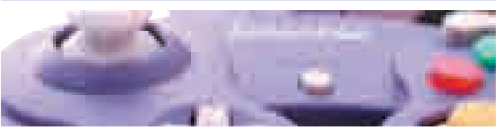
Okay, it's not the greatest game ever made, but there's something worryingly soothing about stalking a Pronghorn Antelope and filling it with lead. Our biggest grievance with Cabela's latest outing is that you can't play online. The chance to run around as a rogue elephant is too good an opportunity to miss, isn't it?





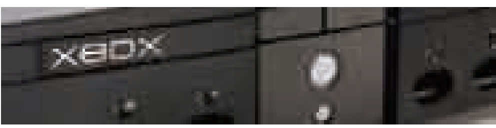
## PLAYSTATION2

| Month | Title | Publisher | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **MARCH '04** | | | |
| 26 March | Champions Of Norrath: Realms Of EverQuest | Ubisoft | |
| 26 March | Glass Rose | Capcom | |
| 26 March | .hack//INFECTION | Atari | |
| 26 March | MX Unleashed | THQ | |
| 26 March | R: Racing Evolution | Electronic Arts | |
| 26 March | R-Type Final | Metro 3D | |
| 26 March | Rainbow Six 3 | Ubisoft | |
| 26 March | This Is Football 2004 | SCEE | |
| **APRIL '04** | | | |
| 02 April | Iron Storm | Wanadoo | |
| 09 April | Alias | Acclaim | |
| 09 April | The Suffering | Midway | |
| 09 April | Richard Burns Rally | SCi | |
| 09 April | World Championship Rugby | Acclaim | |
| 16 April | Rise To Honour | SCEE | |
| 30 April | Fight Night 2004 | Electronic Arts | |
| 30 April | Riding Spirits 2 | Capcom | |
| 30 April | Way Of The Samurai 2 | Capcom | |
| TBC | HeadHunter: Redemption | SEGA | |
| TBC | Hitman: Contracts | Eidos | |
| TBC | Killzone | SCEE | |
| TBC | Knights Of The Temple | TDK | |
| TBC | Legends Of Wrestling: Showdown | Acclaim | |
| TBC | Outlaw Volleyball | TDK | |
| TBC | Red Dead Revolver | Rockstar | |
| TBC | SingStar Pop | SCEE | |
| TBC | Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles | Konami | |
| TBC | Trivial Pursuit Unhinged | Atari | |
| **MAY '04** | | | |
| 14 May | Van Helsing | Vivendi | |
| 28 May | Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | Cy Girls | Konami | |
| TBC | Gradius V | Konami | Wanted |
| TBC | Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain | SCEE | |
| TBC | Transformers | Atari | |
| **JUNE '04** | | | |
| 25 June | Shrek 2 | Activision | |
| TBC | Driv3r | Atari | |
| TBC | Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow | Ubisoft | Wanted |
| TBC | Starsky & Hutch II | Empire | |
| **Q2 '04** | | | |
| TBC | The Getaway 2 | SCEE | |
| TBC | Megaman Anniversary Collection | Capcom | |
| TBC | Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater | Konami | Wanted |
| TBC | Medal Of Honor: Fighter Command | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | Sniper Elite | Wanadoo | |
| TBC | Spider-Man 2 | Activision | |
| TBC | Karaoke Stage | Konami | |
| TBC | EyeToy: Sports | SCEE | |
| TBC | Gran Turismo 4 | SCEE | Wanted |
| TBC | StarCraft: Ghost | Vivendi Universal | |



## GAMECUBE

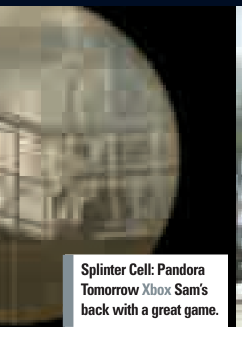
| Month | Title | Publisher | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **MARCH '04** | | | |
| 26 March | Conan | TDK | |
| 26 March | R: Racing Evolution | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | Metal Gear Solid: Twin Snakes | Konami | |
| **APRIL '04** | | | |
| 02 April | Pokémon Channel | Nintendo | |
| **MAY '04** | | | |
| 03 May | Pokémon Colisseum | Nintendo | Wanted |
| 28 May | Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D. Revolution | SEGA | |
| **JUNE '04** | | | |
| 16 June | Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Shrek 2 | Activision | |
| TBC | Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow | Ubisoft | Wanted |
| **Q2 '04** | | | |
| TBC | Donkey Konga | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Wario Ware | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Goblin Commander: Unleash The Horde | Jaleco | |
| TBC | Geist | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Bad Boys II | Empire | |
| TBC | Killer 7 | Capcom | |
| TBC | Paper Mario | Nintendo | Wanted |
| TBC | Pokémon Box | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Spider-Man 2 | Activision | |
| TBC | Starfox Adventures 2 | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Terminator: Dawn Of Fate | Atari | |
| TBC | StarCraft: Ghost | Vivendi | |
| TBC | Mario Tennis | Nintendo | Wanted |
| TBC | Pikmin 2 | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Nintendo Puzzle Collection | Nintendo | |



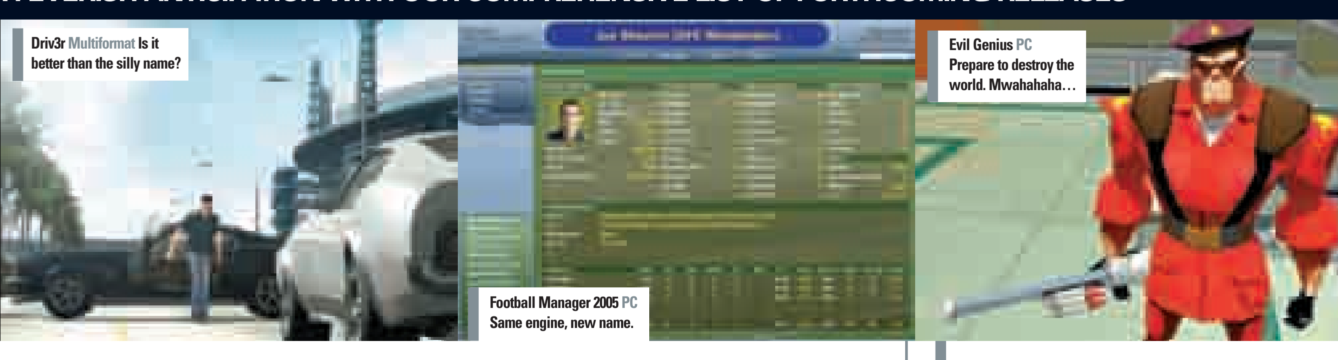
## XBOX

| Month | Title | Publisher |
|---|---|---|
| **MARCH '04** | | |
| 26 March | Dead Man's Hand | Atari |
| 26 March | MX Unleashed | THQ |
| 26 March | R: Racing Evolution | Electronic Arts |

## CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow Xbox Sam's back with a great game.



Driv3r Multiformat Is it better than the silly name?

Football Manager 2005 PC Same engine, new name.

Evil Genius PC Prepare to destroy the world. Mwahahaha…

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 26 March | Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow | Ubisoft | Wanted |
| 26 March | Steel Battalion: Line Of Contact | Capcom | |
| 26 March | Trivial Pursuit Unhinged | Atari | |
| **APRIL '04** | | | |
| 09 April | Alias | Acclaim | |
| 09 April | Knights Of The Temple | TDK | |
| 23 April | Vietnam | Vivendi | |
| 30 April | Fight Night 2004 | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | HeadHunter: Redemption | SEGA | |
| TBC | Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles | Konami | |
| **MAY '04** | | | |
| 01 May | The Suffering | Midway | |
| 07 May | Legends Of Wrestling: Showdown | Acclaim | |
| 14 May | Van Helsing | Vivendi | |
| 28 May | Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban | Electronic Arts | |
| **JUNE '04** | | | |
| TBC | Driv3r | Atari | |
| **Q2 '04** | | | |
| TBC | BC | Microsoft | |
| TBC | Breakdown | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | Hitman: Contracts | Eidos | |
| TBC | Ninja Gaiden | Microsoft | Wanted |
| TBC | Spider-Man 2 | Activision | |
| TBC | RalliSport Challenge 2 | Microsoft | |
| TBC | Halo 2 | Microsoft | Wanted |
| TBC | Call Of Duty: Finest Hour | Activision | |
| TBC | Full Spectrum Warrior | THQ | |
| TBC | The Movies | Activision | |
| TBC | Operation Flashpoint | Codemasters | |
| TBC | Fable | Microsoft | Wanted |
| TBC | True Fantasy Live Online | Microsoft | Wanted |
| TBC | Kameo: Elements Of Power | Microsoft | Wanted |
| TBC | Sudeki | Microsoft | Wanted |
| TBC | Dead Or Alive Ultimate | Microsoft | |



## PC

| Month | Title | Publisher | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **MARCH '04** | | | |
| 26 March | Far Cry | Ubisoft | Wanted |
| 26 March | Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow | Ubisoft | Wanted |
| TBC | Soldner: Secret Of Wars | JoWood | |
| **APRIL '04** | | | |
| 06 April | Richard Burns Rally | SCi | |
| 09 April | Conan | TDK | |
| **MAY '04** | | | |
| 07 May | True Crime: Streets Of L.A. | Activision | |
| 28 May | Alias | Acclaim | |
| 28 May | Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | Painkiller | DreamCatcher | Wanted |
| **JUNE '04** | | | |
| TBC | Driv3r | Atari | |
| TBC | EverQuest II | Ubisoft | |
| **Q2 '04** | | | |
| TBC | Eastside Hockey Manager | SEGA | Wanted |
| TBC | Bard's Tale | Acclaim | |
| TBC | Half-Life 2 | Vivendi | Wanted |
| TBC | The Sims 2 | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines | Activision | |
| TBC | Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault | Electronic Arts | |
| TBC | The Movies | Activision | |
| TBC | Mythica | Microsoft | |
| TBC | Doom III | Activision | Wanted |
| TBC | Warhammer Online | SEGA | |
| TBC | Armed And Dangerous | Activision | |
| TBC | Evil Genius | Vivendi | |
| TBC | Thief: Deadly Shadows | Eidos | |
| TBC | Full Spectrum Warrior | THQ | |
| TBC | Black And White 2 | Microsoft | |
| TBC | S.T.A.L.K.E.R. | THQ | Wanted |
| TBC | Sniper Elite | Wanadoo | |

## GAME BOY ADVANCE

| Month | Title | Publisher | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **MARCH '04** | | | |
| 26 March | Shining Soul II | THQ | |
| 26 March | Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow | Ubisoft | Wanted |
| 26 March | Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2004 | Konami | |
| TBC | CT Special Forces 3: Bioterror | LSP | |
| **APRIL '04** | | | |
| 09 April | Metroid: Zero Mission | Nintendo | Wanted |
| **MAY '04** | | | |
| 28 May | Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban | Electronic Arts | |
| **JUNE '04** | | | |
| 25 June | Shrek 2 | Activision | |
| TBC | Wings Advance | Zoo Digital | |
| **Q1' 04** | | | |
| TBC | Fire Emblem | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Pokémon Leaf Green/Fire Red | Nintendo | Wanted |
| TBC | Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand | Konami | |
| TBC | The Haunted Mansion | Take 2 | |
| TBC | Donkey Kong Country 2 | Nintendo | |
| TBC | F-Zero 2 | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Sonic Advance 3 | SEGA | |
| TBC | Mario Golf: Advance Tour | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Mr Driller | Nintendo | |
| TBC | Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack | SEGA | |

**PLEASE NOTE:** While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. It's not our fault, mind. We just print what we're told. Don't shoot the messenger…

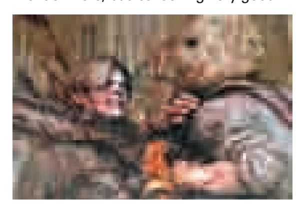


## games™ ON THE HORIZON

### BIOHAZARD 4

**Format:** GameCube
**Publisher:** Capcom

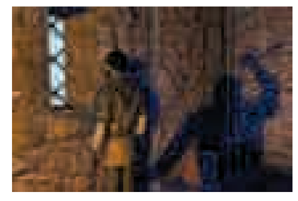
Capcom has totally re-invented its classic franchise. Leon S Kennedy finds himself in an unsettling South American village; the Umbrella Corporation is no longer mentioned; and the series' tired zombies have been replaced by psychotic villagers. There are too many new elements to mention here, but it's looking very good.



### THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

**Format:** PC
**Publisher:** Eidos

Now that *Deus Ex: Invisible War* is out of the way, attention will turn towards the third *Thief* title. Garrett's latest outing is shaping up to be another stealthy romp that should be worthy of your cash. The biggest change is that *Thief* will be playable in either third- or first-person.



### WADE HIXTON'S COUNTER PUNCH

**Format:** Game Boy Advance
**Publisher:** Destination Software

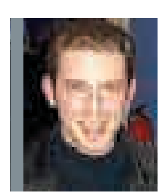
Now here's something you don't see every day, a cel-shaded boxing game (and on the GBA, too). This is shaping up to be a homage to the classic *Punch-Out* series and is further enhanced by the gorgeously slick visuals. There's no news of a UK release, but let's hope someone snaps it up soon.






THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

## TELL ME ABOUT YOUR MOTHER…



**Your mother probably tolerated you playing games, given that you're currently reading this magazine.** The problem for the games industry is that there are some people who actively loathe gaming.

Sony and EA have identified the resistant "gate-keeping mother" who, although sounding like an end-of-level boss, is very protective of her children and generally negative towards gaming. For gaming to become truly mass-market this negativity needs to be neutralised, which requires a number of changes across the industry.

Products like *The Sims* and dancing games have helped, and Sony's EyeToy points towards a new, all-encompassing future. Its accessibility has brought PS2s out of bedrooms into living rooms and demystified gaming for many non-believers.

With over two million copies of *EyeToy: Play* shipped across Europe between July and Christmas last year, it looks like Sony's plan is working. Hopefully this has sown the seeds of a change in attitudes toward gaming – after all, the industry can't afford to wait for the 'dance-mat girls' to become mothers for the negativity to dissipate.

A widening customer base raises new opportunities for the games industry. For publishers and developers it looks like there is a new audience for simple, fun games. Retailers have a new glut of customers, although their needs are different to those of the traditional gamer. It's already evident that there's a spilt between the pick-up-and-play games aimed at a casual audience and more challenging games for the hardcore.

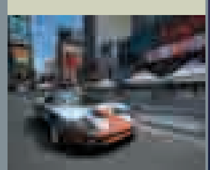
As committed gamers we should welcome these converts to what is becoming a richer gaming scene that can support products aimed at a new, even wider audience…

**Jon Cronin**
PR and marketing manager, CeX



# FROM THE FRONT

HEALTHY CONSOLE SALES IN THE UK AND ABROAD, WHILE THE XBOX 2 RUMOURS DO THE ROUNDS



*Gran Turismo 4* will boost PS2 sales ever further.



*Halo 2* will be a money-spinner for the Xbox.

## SONY SPRINGS AHEAD

### PLAYSTATION2 RIDES HIGH ON NEW-YEAR BOOM

**Spring has sprung, the birds are singing and Sony is enjoying a very good start to 2004. All three consoles have seen an upturn in sales, but the PlayStation2 is increasing its lead over the GameCube and Xbox. After a particularly strong Christmas and New Year period, the first few months of this year have seen Sony's console outsell the Xbox by a ratio of nearly 2.4 to 1, and the GameCube by an impressive 5.4 to 1.**

**The PlayStation2 is actually selling less units than it did over the same period last year, but seeing as it's now sold nearly six million units in the UK in just over three years, it may have reached saturation point.**

**However, although the news looks bad for Nintendo and Microsoft, the Xbox and GameCube are actually doing quite well. The Xbox may be outselling the Cube by 2.3 to 1, but Nintendo's machine is the fastest growing console at the moment, with sales up 78 per cent on this time last year. Of course, the Cube's price cut last year means it isn't making as much money for Nintendo as it could, but this growing user base may make some software developers think again about dropping the machine.**

**The Xbox has also enjoyed a surge in sales, with the number of consoles sold at**



Ten quid says Xbox 2 doesn't have a hard drive…



## THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

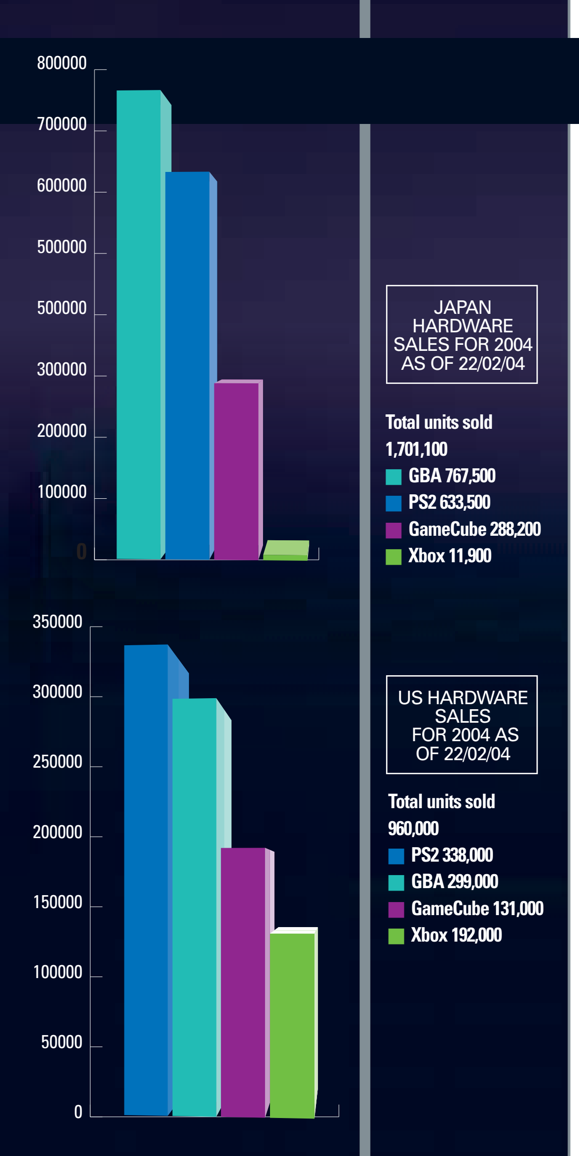
### HARD DRIVE RUMOURS BEGIN TO LOOK EVEN MORE LIKELY

**Among all the speculation about the next generation of consoles, the biggest mystery surrounds Xbox 2.** There's been plenty of debate about whether Microsoft's new console will have a hard drive, but a statement issued by a memory-storage developer indicates that it won't.

M-Systems Flash Disk Pioneers Ltd has entered into a deal with Microsoft to develop customised memory units for future Xbox products. "Although Microsoft is not obligated to purchase any memory units under the agreement, we believe that this agreement could represent a significant opportunity for M-Systems," said M-Systems' CEO and president Dov Moran.

Seeing that the current Xbox hard drive has never fulfilled the expectations Microsoft promised when the machine was announced, we wouldn't be surprised if it does end up being dropped from the next console. It would be relatively easy to use high-density memory cards to take care of music and downloadable content, and this in turn would bring down the development cost of the machine.

Microsoft's only comment on Mr Moran's statement is that "it's just an individual's comment and Microsoft has made no announcements regarding Xbox 2." So unless it's going to drop a bombshell at E3, we're going to have to wait just a bit longer.




JAPAN HARDWARE SALES FOR 2004 AS OF 22/02/04

Total units sold 1,701,100
- GBA 767,500
- PS2 633,500
- GameCube 288,200
- Xbox 11,900

US HARDWARE SALES FOR 2004 AS OF 22/02/04

Total units sold 960,000
- PS2 338,000
- GBA 299,000
- GameCube 131,000
- Xbox 192,000

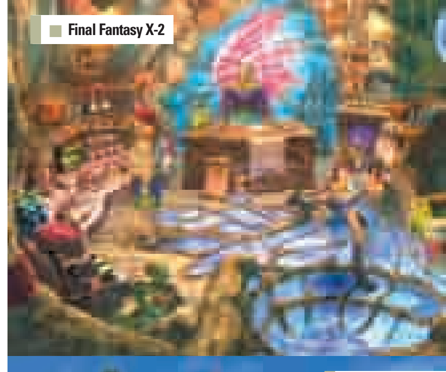
**the start of this year seeing a 25 per cent increase on the number sold in the same period in 2003. Indeed, in the first five weeks of 2004 alone, it was estimated that around 18,000 more consoles (all formats together) were sold than in the same period for the previous year. Sales are also buoyant in the Japanese and US markets (see charts). However, because of sale pricing, the actual value of the market was significantly lower and was estimated as having fallen by around 18 per cent.**

## UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

| | Title | Publisher | Format |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 007: Everything Or Nothing | EA Games | Multi |
| 2 | Final Fantasy X-2 | EA Games | Multi |
| 3 | Sonic Heroes | SEGA | Multi |
| 4 | Norton Internet Security 2004 | Norton | PC |
| 5 | Need For Speed: Underground | EA Games | Multi |
| 6 | The Simpsons: Hit And Run | Vivendi | Multi |
| 7 | Prince Of Persia: TSOT | Ubisoft | Multi |
| 8 | LOTR: Return Of The King | EA Games | Multi |
| 9 | FIFA 2004 | EA Sports | Multi |
| 10 | Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun | EA Games | Multi |

Big-name new entrants *Everything Or Nothing* and *Final Fantasy X-2* storm straight in at the top of this month's chart, and it's good to see *Prince Of Persia* finally getting the recognition it deserves on its multiformat release.

All information is compiled by ChartTrack and is the strict copyright of ELSPA (UK) Ltd. UK Full Price Sales Charts (All Formats) (w/e 28 February 2004)


Final Fantasy X-2

Sonic Heroes


Prince Of Persia

SONY'S HANDHELD DELAYED OUTSIDE JAPAN

# NO PSP FOR 2004

**It seemed too good to be true and it's now been revealed that Sony's highly anticipated handheld, the PSP, will not be appearing outside Japan this year.** Fortunately, gamers in the West will only have to wait until March 2005 (just four months after the proposed European release date) to get their hands on the new machine.

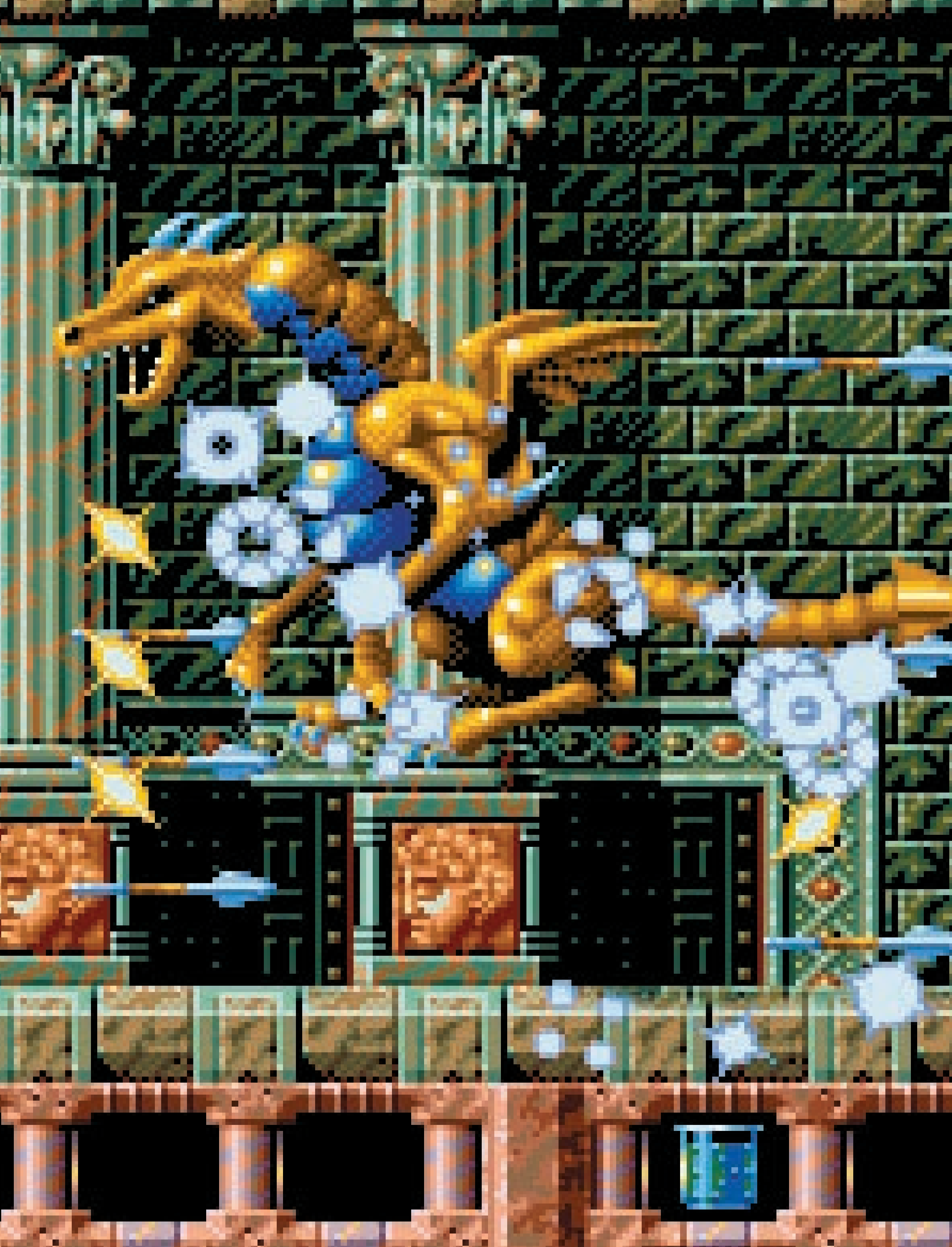
"The reason we pushed it back is that we wanted to be sure that there's a reasonable amount of software titles available at launch," revealed a Sony spokesperson. It's unknown how many launch titles Sony is aiming for, but with the likes of Namco, THQ and Electronic Arts already committed to the machine, you can expect to see the continuation of quite a few popular franchises.

Interestingly, this delay may give Nintendo the upper hand, as it still appears to be on track to release the DS by the end of the year, so it wouldn't have to worry about any competition. It's quite possible that the GBA SP will get a price cut before Christmas 2004, and if Nintendo brings out a budget range of games for the updated handheld it could prove to be unstoppable.

No PSP for you this year.



"Are you a god? Then… die!" **Gods Amiga [Bitmap Brothers] 1991**



# SECOND SIGHT

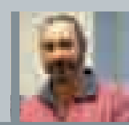


"THIS IS ESSENTIALLY FREE RADICAL'S FIRST ATTEMPT AT A PURE, STORY-DRIVEN, SINGLE-PLAYER EXPERIENCE"

As the story flicks between the past and the present, you'll learn information vital to the plot.

Vattic's psychic powers come in rather handy when you're caught without a weapon…



## DIRECTOR PROFILE

Despite his attempts to avoid the spotlight, David Doak has been a prolific figure in the videogames industry, with hit titles following him wherever he goes – be it during his time spent at Rare (*GoldenEye*, *Perfect Dark*) or now at the helm of the breakaway developer Free Radical Design (the *TimeSplitters* series).

## HISTORY

- **TIMESPLITTERS** 2000 [PlayStation2]
- **PERFECT DARK** 2000 [N64]
- **GOLDENEYE** 1997 [N64]

# OUR FIRST LOOK AT SECOND SIGHT, FREE RADICAL'S THIRD GAME. CONFUSED?

**For a studio that's only developed two games so far, Free Radical Design has a CV that most companies would die for.** Capitalising on a lacklustre PlayStation2 launch with the surprise hit *TimeSplitters* and then solidifying its reputation with a multiformat sequel, it's certainly nailed down the secret formula for a great multiplayer FPS. All of this makes the announcement of *Second Sight* more interesting, as it not only comes as Free Radical's first non-*TimeSplitters* project, but also one that moves into the realm of third-person gameplay.

That *Second Sight* has come out of nowhere is pleasantly surprising, but add the fact that the game is already 90 per cent complete and it's clear that Free Radical has done well to keep the game secret for so long. "We've always kept things under wraps until we think that we have something worthy of showing," says David Doak, director at Free Radical. "In this industry, too many early promises just turn out to be smoke and mirrors, and even game industry 'professionals' are often unable to discriminate between exciting potential and empty hype. With *Second Sight* we've been able to hold back the show-and-tell part until relatively late in development." Of course, even at this late stage, there's still plenty of secrecy over specifics – after all, the company has plans for E3 that it doesn't want to spoil – but from what we've seen so far, *Second Sight* looks very intriguing…

*Second Sight*'s story is one that might sound rather similar to several other games around today (*Breakdown* and *Galerians: Ash* being the most obvious examples) but it's the way the story is told, rather than the initial concept, that makes *Second Sight* appear a little different. The player controls John Vattic, who wakes from a coma as the game begins to find himself imprisoned in a United States medical facility. Unsurprisingly, given his condition, he can't remember anything about his past, but the bloody bandages covering his body (evidence of the surgery and experimentation to which he's been subjected) are slightly more worrying.

Escape is a priority, but things are never that easy – as memories of his past begin to seep through, Vattic struggles to cope with his experiences on a failed mission investigating psychic research in Siberia.

And then there are the strange new powers that he appears to have gained; powers that not only give him an insight into a sinister conspiracy, but that could also destroy mankind as we know it.

Yes, so maybe it sounds a little overdramatic, but as we said, there's a very definite focus on how the story affects the gameplay rather than just having it develop in the background. "The story rapidly moves forward from the initial premise, which is really just a narrative jumping-off point," says Doak. "As John escapes and tries to work out what has happened, he is aided by flashbacks which help him piece together his past and work out what to do in the present." This split between past and present is something that also plays a major part in *Second Sight*, as the action within the game is separated into two distinct timeframes – 'After', which has you

> "PSYCHIC POWERS MIGHT NOT BE ANYTHING NEW, BUT THEY HAVEN'T BEEN SUBJECTED TO THE FREE RADICAL TREATMENT YET…"

## DETAILS

**FORMAT:** Xbox, PS2, GameCube
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** TBA
**DEVELOPER:** Free Radical Design
**RELEASE:** Q4 '04
**GENRE:** Action Adventure
**PLAYERS:** TBC

An action adventure game that mixes up the usual elements of stealth, story and shooting but absolutely swears hand-on-heart to be innovative as well

## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

**What is it about people losing their memories in games? The idea is becoming something of a prerequisite for many genres these days, and as the scope for storytelling in games grows so does the popularity of the amnesia plot device. Covering every genre from RPGs (*Final Fantasy VIII*'s Squall uncovering his orphanage past) to action (*Headhunter*'s Jack Wade relearning his trade, or the entire narrative of both *Breakdown* and *XIII*), there's no denying developers are helping their characters to forget. With *Second Sight* also using memory loss to drive the storyline, we sincerely hope that it avoids clichés and makes this plot angle fresh and interesting.**



The famous *Unreal* engine returns stronger than ever to lend some stunning visual appeal to proceedings.

# SECOND SIGHT CONT.

escaping the medical facility while growing accustomed to your new psychic powers, and 'Before', where you take part in the covert military mission that ultimately triggered the devastating chain of events in Vattic's life. Not only is the dual timeline a fundamental part of the story, but it's also deeply integrated into the game and helps keep the action moving along nicely; something that should prove interesting, especially as a contrast against the plots of the *TimeSplitters* games (which, if we're honest, were shoehorned into games built for multiplayer purposes).

What isn't being revealed right now is exactly how far Vattic's psychic abilities go – whether he can simply read minds, or destroy things just by looking at them – not to mention how the abilities are implemented and if the plot allows for new powers to be learned during the game. What we do know, though, is that *Second Sight* isn't just *Scanners*-esque brain frying and mental manipulation. Those who prefer more traditional methods of combat will be pleased to know that gunplay is also catered for, bolstered by more elaborate moves such as using the guards as shields when things get tough.

Stealth plays an important part in the game, particularly at the beginning when Vattic is especially vulnerable and at points when a gung-ho approach is likely to result in an untimely death, although the likelihood of this turning *Second Sight* into just a *Splinter Cell* clone with telepathy is pretty small. "We're offering the player a good deal of flexibility in how they choose to approach situations in the game because we ourselves, as players, enjoy that and don't like to be strait-jacketed," says Doak. "Certainly, the psychic abilities present the meat of the gameplay, but since they have been designed to augment the stealth and shooting aspects rather than sit apart from them, it's really just a sumptuous pick-and-mix buffet of styles."

The game is visually reminiscent of *TimeSplitters* with the characters sporting exaggerated, rounded features while the backgrounds look clean and polished – though that's not a bad thing. But Free Radical is keen to stress that this is a separate product and will garner its full attention. "*Second Sight* marks an important step in the expansion of Free Radical," says company director Steve Ellis. "The company has grown to two talented teams, developing two great original products. We've come a long way in five years." The other product is, no surprises, the sequel to *TimeSplitters 2*. However, it's refreshing to see a games company that isn't pinning all its hopes on a big-name sequel and is perfectly prepared to give a new project equal billing.

Despite coming as far as it has, though, *Second Sight* still has a long way to go – the release date is vaguely listed as 'later in 2004', while Doak admits that the company is "actively looking for a publisher at the moment, although the further into development we get, the better the game is becoming and we've already got a lot of interest from publishers." We have little doubt that such issues will be easily resolved for a developer as competent as Free Radical, especially given how much promise this game has right now.

## "TWO YEARS IN DEVELOPMENT MEAN THAT SECOND SIGHT IS NEARLY FINISHED, DESPITE BEING COMPLETELY UNKNOWN"

## LONG TIME COMING

**The fact that *Second Sight* has been in development for over two years (and in the conceptual stage for even longer) says something about the ambition that Free Radical has for the game. "The idea goes back to 1999 when we were just starting up – we wanted to make a game which told a good story in an interesting way," says director David Doak. "Speculation about what would happen if psychic powers were real provided a great bedrock for the story, and using flashbacks interactively was clearly a way to expand storytelling in games. When the film *Memento* came out it definitely struck a chord with what we are trying to achieve with *Second Sight*."**



Breaking free of a military facility is no mean feat, but then Vattic's no stranger to taking out people in his way when necessary.




## COMPANY PROFILE

Formed in 1998 after a number of Rare's precious *GoldenEye* development team left to start afresh, Free Radical Design has always had a good reputation despite only producing a small number of games. Recently, the company has parted ways with UK publisher Eidos, allowing EA to pick up the rights to the upcoming third *TimeSplitters* game.

## HISTORY

- **TIMESPLITTERS 2** 2002 [PlayStation2]
- **TIMESPLITTERS** 2000 [PlayStation2]

You'll have to use each power to its fullest – this one, for instance, allows you to create a distraction for the guards.

"SECOND SIGHT REALISES OUR AMBITIONS TO CREATE EXCITING, FRESH IP AND INNOVATE IN A NEW GENRE"
DAVID DOAK, DIRECTOR, FREE RADICAL DESIGN

## VIDEOGAMES MATHS

IT WAS LOVE AT SECOND SIGHT

TIMESPLITTERS 2 x MIND POWERS - FPS = SECOND SIGHT

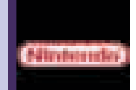
# THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE FOUR SWORDS +




Most gamers will be familiar with the land of Hyrule by now.

Nintendo has got some impressive results with particle and distortion effects.

“CO-OPERATIVE GAMEPLAY CAN BE A DAUNTING TASK WHEN EACH PLAYER IS LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE”
*NINTENDO OF AMERICA PRESS RELEASE*



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ While members of the original GBA *Four Swords* team (who are actually Capcom staff) were involved with this title, Nintendo is still very much in charge. Over the years Nintendo's in-house development team has been responsible for hits such as *Super Mario 64, The Wind Waker* and *Super Mario Kart.*

## HISTORY

- **ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER** 2003 [GameCube]
- **SUPER MARIO 64** 1996 [N64]
- **SUPER MARIO KART** 1991 [SNES]

THREE BRAND NEW ZELDA GAMES IN ONE NEAT LITTLE PACKAGE? WELL, NEARLY…

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** GameCube
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Nintendo
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** Q4 '04 (Japan: Out Now, US: May '04)
**GENRE:** Action RPG
**PLAYERS:** 1-4

■ One disc, three GBA link-up-compatible games set in the *Zelda* universe, with the emphasis on the GameCube version of the GBA title *Four Swords.*

***Four Swords*? That rings a bell. Probably because there's a GBA game that goes by the very same name.** The difference with the GameCube version is that all-important '+' symbol. In the world of Nintendo the plus symbol tends to mean "we think we can make a bit of money out of this by releasing it on the Cube, but we might need to add a few extra bits lest gamers boycott us." Us? Cynical? Never…

Truth be told, though, Nintendo's GBA adaptation is more than just a quick cash-in. The CD (sorry, proprietary DVD) will consist of three separate games: *Hyrule Adventure, Shadow Battle* and *Navi Trackers. Hyrule Adventure* is an upgraded version of the GBA's *Four Swords*, where high-resolution textures, *Wind Waker*-esque animation and some smart particle effects join the obvious improvements. The game itself sees up to four people exploring the world of Hyrule in an addictive mixture of co-operative puzzle solving and first-come first-served tomb raiding. The puzzles in the game require players to work together, although the ultimate aim of the game is to collect as many Rupees as possible.

*Shadow Battle* is a head-to-head version of *Hyrule Adventure*, which gets rid of the puzzles and opts for all-out multiplayer battles. All four characters can pick up and use any of the numerous Link weapons: Bombs, Boomerangs, Catapults, Fire Rods, Bows… even Epona the horse is in there. *Navi Trackers* is the confirmed name for the bizarre 'connectivity' title first shown at last year's E3. The game now sees up to four players finding clues and solving puzzles before tearing through town and finding the hidden treasure. We have to admit that last year's E3 presentation was laughable, but as a part of this special pack it doesn't seem anywhere near as lame.

There's more to *Four Swords +* than meets the eye, however. This game is yet another showcase for the connectivity hard sell. With the exception of the single-player *Hyrule Adventure* you have to have at least one GBA plugged in to play these games. A foolish move on Nintendo's part? Perhaps, but when you consider that everyone in the gaming world has a GBA, and that the link-up allows for some neat little gameplay ideas, it all starts to make sense.

In *Hyrule Adventure* there are many caves, tunnels and houses for you to go into. In order to display this information while the other players are on the main map the game then moves onto that individual's GBA screen. This means that everything you collect while you're in the house or tunnel remains your little secret (unless, of course, an opponent decides to follow you in and spy on you).

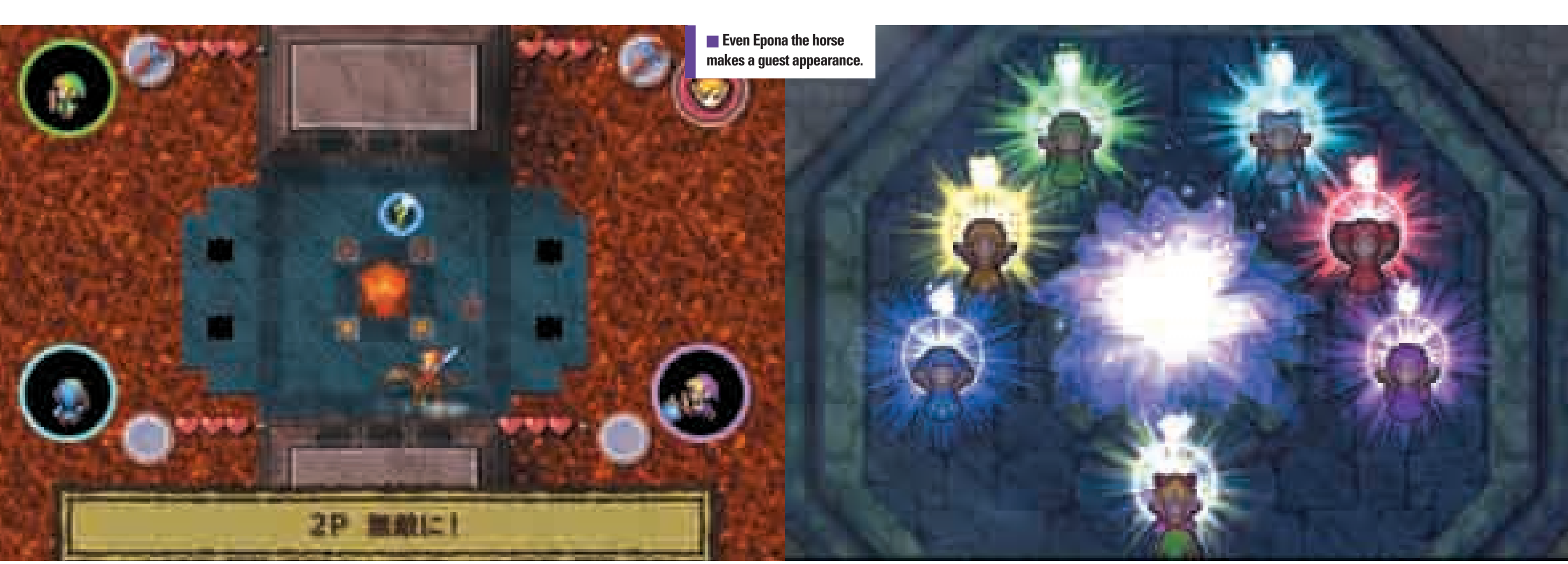
With *Shadow Battle* Nintendo has made it impossible for other players to enter a room that you're already in. That means there's no way for anyone to know what you're doing when you're in seclusion. *Navi Trackers* is a little different because the main game takes place on the GBA screen. The only aspect of the game that appears on the TV is the host of the game giving you clues.

At first, the idea of *Four Swords +* seems a bit cheeky, but when you consider that you'll be getting at least two extremely playable titles (we imagine *Shadow Battle* will rival *Bomberman* for playability) and a GBA Link Cable for £40, it's quite an inviting proposition.

"TWO EXTREMELY PLAYABLE TITLES AND A GBA LINK CABLE FOR £40 IS AN INVITING IDEA"

## LINK TO THE FUTURE

**Considering the popularity of the GBA (it now sells as well as, if not better than, the PS2 on a weekly basis), Nintendo desperately needs to link its little handheld to the GameCube in any way it can. Games such as *The Wind Waker* managed to do that quite well, but very few GameCube games really make it an essential gameplay factor. *Four Swords +* is the first game in a long time that actually makes it necessary to go to the effort of linking up the two machines – you have to connect in order to get the most out of the game. These kinds of gameplay enhancements should be at the forefront of Nintendo's mind as it prepares to show off *Wind Waker 2, Mario 128* and *Metroid Prime 2* at E3 in May.**




■ Even Epona the horse makes a guest appearance.

# BURNOUT 3



Crash mode returns in spectacular fashion, thanks to the breathtaking new destruction physics.

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT:** PlayStation2, Xbox
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts
**DEVELOPER:** Criterion
**RELEASE:** Sept '04
**GENRE:** Driving
**PLAYERS:** 1-2 (1-6 PS2 Online)

Criterion teams up with EA to bring us the most exhilarating and visually impressive dose of dangerous driving yet.

## ANOTHER CRASH COURSE IN HOW NOT TO DRIVE

**While the most celebrated racing games on the market seem obsessed with pushing our driving skills to the limit by recreating ever more authentic vehicle handling, the popularity of Criterion's *Burnout* series has proved we still crave the happy-go-lucky thrills of a good old-fashioned acceleration-fest every once in a while.** Evidently keen to monopolise the high-speed end of the console racing spectrum following the unprecedented success of *Need For Speed: Underground*, EA has taken the wheel of the *Burnout* franchise from Acclaim. And it's already promising the keenly awaited third instalment will take the turbo-charged street racing formula up several gears when it hits the shelves later this year.

Once again encouraging players to drive as audaciously as possible by rewarding feats of motoring lunacy with bonus points and filling the all-important Boost meter, *Burnout 3* will retain the exhilarating danger and breakneck speed that made its predecessors such a riveting ride, yet looks to improve on just about every aspect of play. Most notable is the inclusion of online functionality. It's been confirmed for the PS2 version, but until the ongoing stand-off between EA and Microsoft is resolved there will obviously be no Xbox Live support for the game.

Up to six players can engage in the online contests, and since weaving your way through dense traffic at death-defying speeds forms such a central part of the reflex-taxing gameplay, overcoming the problems associated with processing such a number of incidental vehicles for all six players is quite an achievement. The prospect of online play also inspired the introduction of a more combative element to the game, as players are now actively encouraged to ram and shunt their opponents off the road. As if concentrating on driving your own race at such an insane pace amidst the heavily populated public roads wasn't enough to keep you occupied, the ability to directly influence your adversaries' progress brings with it a whole new set of thoroughly unsporting considerations.

With its dazzling new graphics engine and spectacularly enhanced crash system – which promises to make wipeouts just as thrilling as those skilful near misses – *Burnout 3* looks certain to become yet another jewel in EA's crown.

> "SPECTACULARLY ENHANCED CRASHES SHOULD MAKE WIPEOUTS AS THRILLING AS THOSE SKILFUL NEAR MISSES"




You're now encouraged to take as much interest in your opponents' fate as your own.


eMag

# STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

## THAT'S NO REGULAR STAR WARS CASH-IN…

**From role-playing to strategy gaming, it seems the basic conventions of just about any genre can be elevated to mouth-watering new heights by staging the action within the *Star Wars* universe.** Just look at the hype surrounding *Star Wars Battlefront* – the *Battlefield 1942*-inspired online shooter that trades tanks and planes for AT-STs and X-Wings. The truth is that few things excite us more than our favourite gaming concepts getting the full *Star Wars* makeover. Yet while military squad-based shooter *Star Wars: Republic Commando* sees LucasArts moving the universe's most prestigious licence into another untapped genre, this could be the least recognisable version of a galaxy far, far away that fans have yet to step into.

Although the action will take place during the Clone Wars, players' experience of the events taking place between *Episodes I* and *II* will be somewhat removed from the silver-screen adventures of Anakin and Obi-Wan. As leader of a crack team of elite commandos, prepare to see a much grittier side of life in the *Star Wars* universe during your time with The Republic's answer to the SAS. Incredibly dark – both in terms of the gloomy environments and the unusually brutal tone of combat – if it weren't for the familiar sight of Trade Federation Battle Droids and Geonosian Warriors you could be forgiven for thinking this had nothing to do with George Lucas' epic saga at all.



The darker ambience and fierce combat is quite different from anything we're used to seeing in the *Star Wars* universe.

Yet what it lacks in familiarity, *Republic Commando* looks to make up for with gameplay that should establish the title as a serious squad-based contender in its own right. Most intriguing is the user-friendly 'smart squad' system for issuing commands with no let-up in the vigorously paced blasting. Your helmet's T-shaped visor doesn't just offer a uniquely authentic HUD, but is capable of displaying holographic images that pre-empt the formation your intelligent AI troops would take around objects, doors and the like, enabling *Full Spectrum Warrior*-style orders to be issued with a single click.

Enjoying an unusual level of creative freedom within the traditionally rigid *Star Wars* mould, this unlikely spin-off could well be the game the LucasArts catalogue is looking for.

**"PREPARE TO SEE A MUCH GRITTIER SIDE OF LIFE IN THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE"**

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** PC, Xbox
**ORIGIN:** US
**PUBLISHER:** LucasArts
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** Q3 '04
**GENRE:** FPS
**PLAYERS:** 1 (Up to 16 Online)

LucasArts reveals the dark side of *Star Wars* life in this gritty squad-based blast fest.



You'll view all the action through the familiar T-shaped slit in your commando's helmet.


eMag

# ROME: TOTAL WAR



**VIDEOGAMES MATHS**

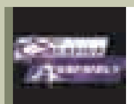
**ROMANS... FAASANDS OF 'EM**

10,000 MEN - GRAND OLD DUKE OF YORK x ROMANS = ROME: TOTAL WAR

**"THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WE'VE FACED WITH ROME: TOTAL WAR IS GETTING PEOPLE TO BELIEVE WHAT THEY SEE"**

*TIM ANSELL, MANAGING DIRECTOR, THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY*

Battlefields are immense enough to accommodate the ridiculous number of soldiers under your command.



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Founded in 1987 by Tim Ansell, The Creative Assembly initially specialised in conversions of hit games, pioneering the concept of in-game commentary while porting *FIFA* to the PC for EA. The studio really shot to fame in 2000 with the release of definitive RTS epic *Shogun: Total War*.

## HISTORY

- **MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR** 2002 [PC]
- **SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR** 2000 [PC]
- **FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER** 1995 [PC]

# ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME FOR STRATEGY GAMERS

**After merely glancing at a few mouth-watering screens from The Creative Assembly's latest evolution of its celebrated *Total War* series, we really don't need to tell you that this game is shaping up to be mightily impressive.** While the epic 3D battlefield confrontations featured in *Shogun* and *Medieval* have already seen the award-winning formula redefine the boundaries of strategy gaming, *Rome: Total War* is expected to eclipse the feats of its predecessors and leave the rest of the genre with some serious catching up to do.

As the title suggests, the Roman conquest of Europe provides the battle-rich history against which the breathtaking capabilities of the all-new *Total War* engine are to be showcased. Spanning the period between 264 BC and 14 AD, history buffs can engage in painstakingly accurate re-enactments of the era's great skirmishes while the rest of us simply revel in the sheer scale and splendour of it all. A staggering 10,000 units can now be displayed on screen at a time, dwarfing the several hundred soldiers that enabled previous *Total War* titles to conjure up an awesome sense of magnitude, guaranteed to satisfy the most megalomaniacal appetites and opening up a vastly broadened spectrum of tactical possibilities.

> "ROME: TOTAL WAR IS EXPECTED TO LEAVE THE REST OF THE GENRE WITH SOME SERIOUS CATCHING UP TO DO"

But if panning out to marvel at the unprecedented number of active legions under your command isn't impressive enough, zooming right into the thick of the action reveals the astonishing level of detail being simultaneously processed for each soldier. Gone is the simplistic repertoire of pre-rendered animations notoriously performed by RTS units in combat, replaced with fully articulated character models who fight individual battles amidst the sea of thousands. The result will not only be the most cinematic spectacle of battlefield action ever seen in a videogame, but also the most authentic playing field upon which to base your strategies. Intriguingly, while your tactical arsenal is now more comprehensive than ever, the control scheme has actually been significantly condensed.

But it's not just the epic skirmishes that have undergone a complete overhaul, as the turn-based element of manoeuvring your forces around the campaign map between battles has also been enriched beyond recognition. Rather than dividing ancient Europe into Risk-style territories as before, the entire region of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East is presented as one freely navigable arena divided into a grid of around 10,000 squares. Players can move their armies over any passable terrain and erect cities or defences at any strategic point they choose. Battles can erupt on any one of these tiny squares, with each battlefield containing detailed landscape true to its geographical location and, best of all, featuring any buildings and infrastructure that have been created there.

Combine the vast number of basic battlegrounds with this ability to dictate the presence of man-made structures, then throw shifting seasonal weather into the equation and you've got a near-infinite collection of backdrops to host the action. Yet however enticing the theatre, it's the jaw-dropping battles that look set to conquer the genre when the new *Total War* engine is unleashed.

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** PC
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Activision
**DEVELOPER:** The Creative Assembly
**RELEASE:** Q3 '04
**GENRE:** Strategy
**PLAYERS:** 1 (Up to 8 online)

■ Watch in awe as 10,000 troops battle it out on screen at once in the most ambitious strategic warfare sim ever created.

## CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS

**During your conquest of Europe you'll come across 20 separate factions, each with their own unit types and unique approaches to warfare. The armies of Greece, Egypt and Rome cross swords with an array of nations across the battlefields of Europe, using historically authentic strategies that will enable enthusiasts to step into the military mindset of the age. Roman legions can adopt the familiar 'tortoise' formation, using their shields to protect the group from arrow fire; elephants will plough through helpless infantry; and tar-smothered pigs can be set alight and sent squealing into enemy ranks.**



■ The cities you construct are replicated brick for brick on the battlefield, making for some fabulously detailed backdrops.

# DRIV3R



The real-time shadow casting is some of the best we've seen in a game to date.

Damage models are pretty drastic but at least you know when your car's about to fall to bits.

## T4NN3R 15 B4CK 0N TH3 5TR33T5…

**Not that it will come as any surprise, but we have to admit to being somewhat sceptical about *Driv3r*.** We've had our hopes built up and later dashed by the likes of *True Crime* and *The Getaway* and we're not fond of the idea of being stung by another driving/shooting combo. Suffice to say, the well-publicised fact that Atari is ploughing ten million euros into half a year's worth of European promotion has also set off klaxons and flashing lights in our heads, but on booting up the preview we were, shall we say, treated. Tearing up Miami on a high-powered motorbike gave us quite an appetite but the only thing that would seem to fit on our *Driv3r*-branded tableware is a rather sizeable chunk of humble pie…

We've been genuinely impressed with what we've seen and played of Reflections' latest effort so far. That's not to say there aren't problems with it, and these are predominantly in the areas you'd expect – at the time of writing, third-person sections are somewhat clunky while on foot (hence the inclusion of a first-person option, which feels a whole lot better) and much of the mission content treads a fine line between feeling tired and digitally capturing familiar silver-screen scenarios. Thankfully, the bits we've sampled have leaned towards the latter. Combined with the few minor yet important original features and ideas, a varied structure across the three sprawling cities will do the game no end of favours.

> "REFLECTIONS' ATTENTION TO DETAIL HAS MADE THE ONCE-DULL TAKE A RIDE MODE A WHOLE LOT MORE ENJOYABLE"

But it's the physics engine that really gives *Driv3r* the edge, with bullets and collisions affecting scenery and vehicles in an impressively realistically manner. The game's trailer gives a good idea of what to expect, depicting Tanner emptying an entire SMG clip into the side of a car and leaving a realistic trail of punctures – re-enact this for yourself and the idea is further developed, enabling deformation of panels, windows, lights and tyres before you even break out the explosives. This is where the engine comes into its own, with blasts ripping vehicles and surroundings to pieces and creating a very satisfying rain of destruction. For the final insult, why not pull the fallen driver out of the hole where the door should be and take his seat in the burnt-out, wheel-less chassis? Or maybe just kick his wing mirrors down the road? Reflections' attention to detail has made the once-dull Take A Ride mode a whole lot more enjoyable.

Boasting more realistic and expansive digital re-creations of real cities than *True Crime* and *The Getaway* respectively, what *Driv3r* lacks in originality it makes up for with scale, potential and its Hollywood-influenced ambience. This extends to most elements of the game, from the grade-A voice talent of Michael Madsen, Michelle Rodriguez and Iggy Pop to the obvious cinematography and direction 'homages' and gritty subject matter. Without too much reliance on cut-scenes, the 'interactive film' moniker of the days of FMV games is being brought bang up to date.

Recent delays of the game have apparently been to allow Atari to make the most of its mammoth publicity budget, and provided the core game is being constantly tweaked and enhanced rather than sitting in a warehouse until release, we're fairly confident that while *Driv3r* may not entirety silence its critics, it should at least reduce them to a whisper.

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** Xbox, PS2
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Atari
**DEVELOPER:** Reflections
**RELEASE:** 1 June
**GENRE:** Adventure
**PLAYERS:** 1

Real physics, real cities, real damage – in fact, there's not much about Reflections' latest offering that doesn't seem real. Aside from the shocking title, of course.

## WHEN WILL I BE FAMOUS?

***Driv3r* is incredibly proud of its cinematic basis and the guys at Reflections are obviously keen to keep the player in full control of the action. They've achieved this in a multitude of ways, the first of which is the aptly named 'Thrill Cam'. Thanks to the joys of fully analogue controllers, a simple button press at any time slows the action and cuts to a selected cinematic view, with the amount by which the action is slowed governed by how hard you jam on the appropriate button. Taking things even further, the Film Director mode in the menu takes the last couple of minutes of action and allows you to toy with camera angles and effects to your heart's content. This is as user-friendly as it is effective and after a few minutes of option tweaking, we'd put together a rather impressive chase scene. Good stuff.**



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Founded in 1984, the Newcastle-based Reflections cut its teeth on the home-computing scene before making it big with *Destruction Derby* on the PSone. Unsurprisingly, smashing up cars has been its specialist subject ever since…

## HISTORY

- **STUNTMAN** 2002 [PlayStation 2]
- **DESTRUCTION DERBY** 1995 [PSone]
- **SHADOW OF THE BEAST** 1989 [Amiga]

■ Pedestrians foolish enough to get caught in your trail of carnage will regret it in the morning.

■ Environments are solid as they come but there's some noticeable pop-up on traffic.

17 / 999

**"SIMPLY PUT, DRIVER IS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND GROUND-BREAKING BRANDS IN INDUSTRY HISTORY"**
*DRIV3R MARKETING MATERIAL*

### VIDEOGAMES MATHS

**A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ALGEBRA**

DRIVER - E + 3 = DRIV3R

# X-MEN: LEGENDS




Battles are high on action, but only a strong tactical approach will best use the powers at your disposal.

## WILL THIS RPG BE THE X-MEN'S BEST MUTATION YET?

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** PS2, Xbox, GameCube
**ORIGIN:** US
**PUBLISHER:** Activision
**DEVELOPER:** Raven Software
**RELEASE:** Q4 '04
**GENRE:** Action RPG
**PLAYERS:** 1-4

Adventure alone or with up to three friends as you command a quartet of X-Men through their first RPG outing.

**Ever since the runaway success of *Heretic* and *Hexen* in the mid Nineties the name Raven Software has become synonymous with quality first-person shooters.** But delve a little deeper into the developer's back catalogue and early titles *Black Crypt* and *Shadowcaster* serve as a reminder that the studio is no stranger to the role-playing genre either. *X-Men: Legends* sees the company making a long overdue return to its roots in mouth-watering fashion, as everyone's favourite mutant superheroes finally get the RPG outing their fans have been clamouring for.

Based on a system of advanced real-time combat similar to that popularised in such console-based adventures as *Dark Alliance II*, players can look forward to all the meaty goodness of an RPG but with no shortage of fast-paced action to maintain a suitably rousing tempo. Assembling a hand-picked quartet of heroes from a pool of 15 familiar faces, players will embark on an epic quest to once again save humankind from the evil intentions of Magneto and the fearsome Brotherhood of Mutants. Over the course of a deep, multi-branching storyline penned by a team of comic-industry veterans, your ever-evolving squad of characters will cross paths with an equally recognisable cast of adversaries and find themselves in all manner of sticky situations that will stretch their special powers to the limit.

"PLAYERS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO ALL THE GOODNESS OF AN RPG WITH NO SHORTAGE OF FAST-PACED ACTION"

Arguably the game's most enticing factor will be the sheer variety of trademark abilities the rich palette of featured characters bring into play, which not only offers a range of approaches to combat but will present a multitude of solutions to every problem. Teamwork between your superheroes will play a major part in the game and, along with generic tactics like incapacitating enemies with Iceman's freezing power before sending the mighty Colossus in for the kill, every pairing of X-Men can also perform a special collaborative attack that combines their abilities to devastating effect.

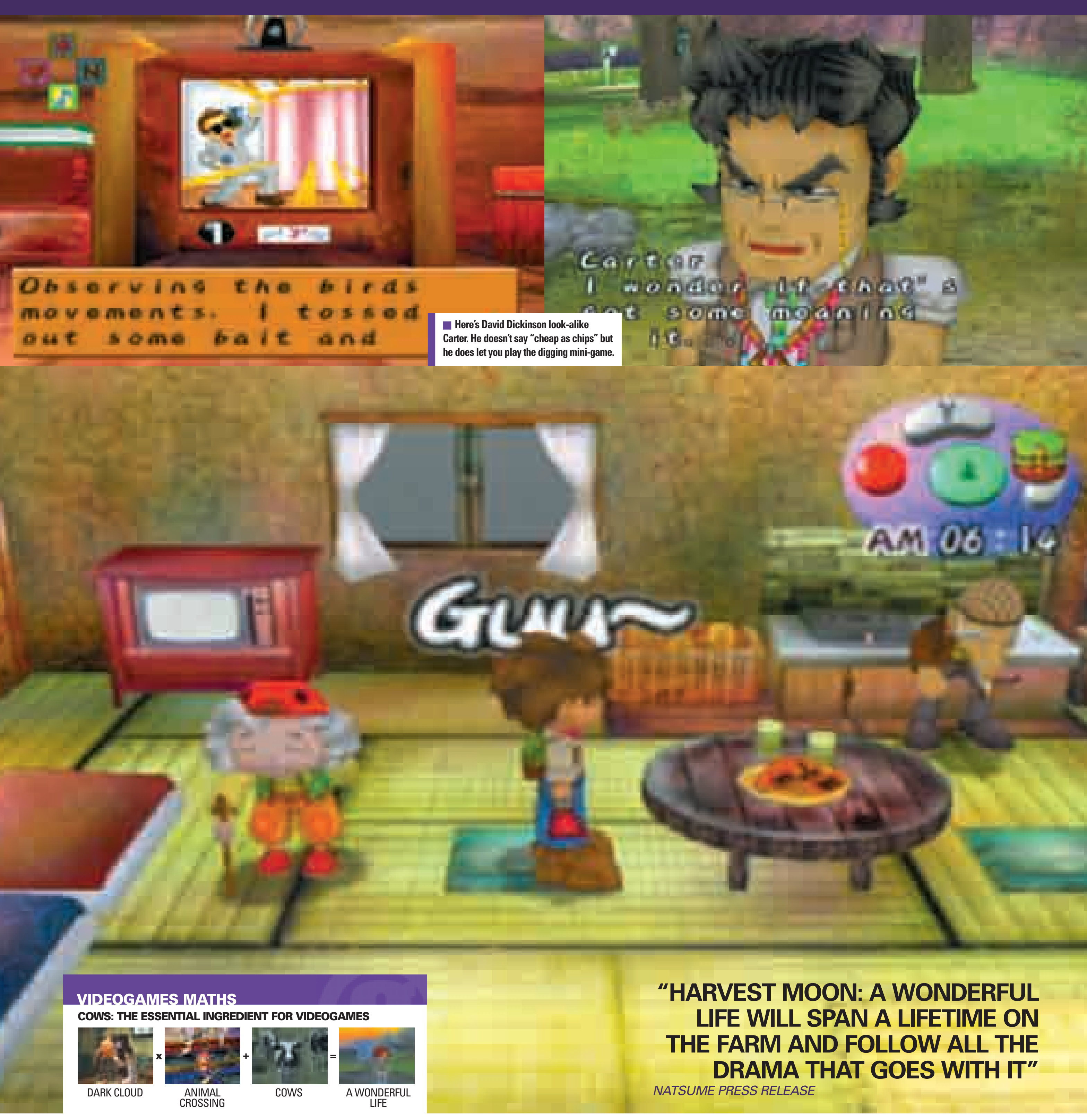
As the story progresses you'll also be able to advance specific skills for each character in true RPG style, ultimately enabling you to shape a uniquely balanced band of heroes and wage war on the forces of evil in any manner you choose.



You'll need a variety of special abilities, but sometimes there's no substitute for good old-fashioned brawn.


eMag

# HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE




Here's David Dickinson look-alike Carter. He doesn't say "cheap as chips" but he does let you play the digging mini-game.

## VIDEOGAMES MATHS

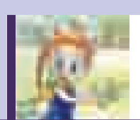
**COWS: THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR VIDEOGAMES**

DARK CLOUD × ANIMAL CROSSING + COWS = A WONDERFUL LIFE

> **"HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE WILL SPAN A LIFETIME ON THE FARM AND FOLLOW ALL THE DRAMA THAT GOES WITH IT"**
>
> *NATSUME PRESS RELEASE*

# HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE

GAMECUBE



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Natsume has been publishing videogames since 1990 but *Harvest Moon* has been its only European cash cow (no pun intended) for the last few years. Some titles still make it to our shores and *Reel Fishing III* was the most recent to slip through the net (again, no pun intended).

## HISTORY

■ **HARVEST MOON: SAVE THE HOMELAND** 2001 [PS2]
■ **HARVEST MOON 64** 1999 [N64]
■ **HARVEST MOON** 1996 [SNES]

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** GameCube
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft
**DEVELOPER:** Natsume
**RELEASE:** March '04 (Japan: Out Now)
**GENRE:** Strategy
**PLAYERS:** 1

■ It's a farming sim that requires you to maintain an income and stave off hunger while keeping an eye out for the ladies.

## OLD MCDONALD HAD A FARM BUT HE NEVER HAD IT THIS HARD…

**Farming isn't the sexiest concept to try and replicate on consoles.** It's easy to understand the appeal of embarking on a city-spanning crime spree with *Broken Wings* playing in the background, or sneaking around an oil tanker and stuffing guards into lockers. But why do we now find ourselves on a farm, washing a cow so she stays happy? And, more importantly, why are we enjoying it so much?

Since its quiet introduction on the SNES back in 1996, *Harvest Moon* has slowly gained popularity thanks to its consistent quality and unusual output. *A Wonderful Life* will be the first in the series for the GameCube and sees you taking over a small farm in Forget-Me-Not Valley, guided by your cranky mentor Takamura. He'll briefly explain how to milk cows before hobbling off and leaving you to your own devices. So you potter about your farm and discover you can plant crops, which need watering and monitoring. You also learn how to deal with the mood swings of your cow, scything down the grass behind the barn to make fodder to keep her happy. Then you find out about the archaeological digs, the fruit stalls, the cooking…

The open approach combined with a lack of signposting is the hook from which Natsume is hanging its gameplay. Maintenance of the farm is important – you regularly need food – but that aside, *A Wonderful Life* is rather ambiguous in what it demands from the player. You can explore the neighbouring village and chat to the locals, or you can hunt down the mini-games that are dotted around the village. It's even possible to buy a fishing rod and spend all day by the river trying to catch dinner. Without any goals set in stone, this laissez-faire attitude should make for a tranquil videogame, although more guidance on the confusing intricacies of farming would be welcome.

For those who want to spend their days doing something more productive than hooking pond life out of the local stream, there are plenty of ways to pass the time. Extra buildings can be bought (as can more animals and tools), so expanding your farm is another option. You'll also need some female company for the cold winter months so you could become a rural romeo, showering the village ladies with gifts and attention until you win someone's hand (another mainstay of the *Harvest Moon* series). There are so many different diversions in *Harvest Moon* that discovering them all should be one of the most enjoyable aspects of the game.

Finally, there's the link-up with the GBA's *Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town*, which will allow your farmer to travel to Mineral Town itself. Natsume promises that this will bring "new exclusive events" and "surprises", which is just as well because our main concern is how repetitive the relatively small playing area of *Harvest Moon* will become. Hopefully, this link-up – along with the different farming tactics required for the changing seasons and various ways of expanding your farm – should keep gamers busy.

The *Harvest Moon* series has consistently proved that farming translates into a compulsive gaming experience. This latest addition should continue this trend, and with any luck it will also provide a popular alternative to stealth, sniper rifles and skateboards.

## HOPELESS ROMANTIC

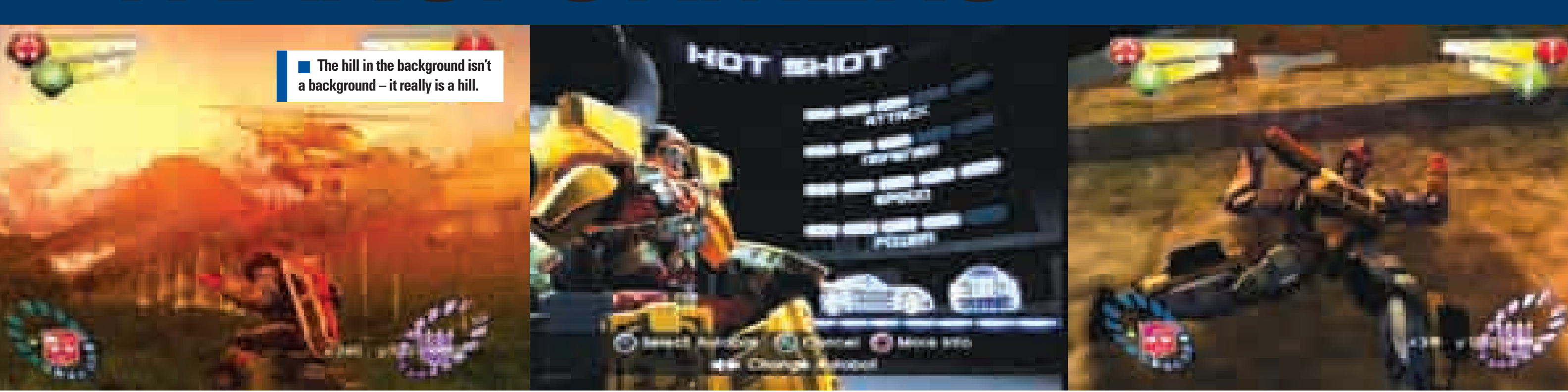
**Finding a wife has always been a big part of the *Harvest Moon* series and *A Wonderful Life* is no different, a point emphasised by Takamura's somewhat disturbing orders that you "find a wife, quickly". Sadly, with no internet connection on your farm and therefore no easy access to easternbrides.com, you must do this the hard way. That means observing time-honoured traditions of flowers, compliments, presents and patience in order to win the girl of your dreams. Not that the fairer sex is ever predictable – Lamaine loves any plant you pick for her but Nami seems more interested in the skulls brought back from your archaeological jaunts. You can even break certain moral codes if you like; Chris is married with children but will that stop you bombarding her with flowers and following her around?**

"THE OPEN APPROACH AND LACK OF SIGNPOSTING IS THE HOOK FROM WHICH NATSUME IS HANGING ITS GAMEPLAY"




■ To marry Nami and enjoy a lifetime of fighting over the remote control, you need to offer her unusual gifts.

# TRANSFORMERS




The hill in the background isn't a background – it really is a hill.

## FOLDED CORRECTLY EVEN THIS PAGE COULD BE A ROBOT – IN DISGUISE

**Atari owns the licence for Hasbro products and so it should come as no surprise that it's publishing a game based on this nostalgia-tipped warhead of a title.** In fact, the whole thing has the smell of inevitability about it. What is surprising is that initial playtests prove that *Transformers* (the *Armada* suffix now dropped) is set to be a thoroughly respectable action game in its own right. Indeed, even if you hold Transformers in the same disdain as you do those terrible 20-something people who insist that they remember *The Klangers* the first time round then you're in for an *I Love 1986*-laced treat.

We dare any male old enough to remember the first wave of the Rubik's-doll robo craze not to raise a smile when their Autobot speeds across terrain in its sports car form, cruises past a herd of evil Decepticons and then transforms into its robot guise, feet skidding until momentum is lost and the battle commences. Those of you who are fans of the recent *Transformers Armada* TV series will be hooked instantly, too. And for once you won't be suckers.

The scale of the game's settings matches the enormity of the featured warring robots perfectly. Each level is big enough for the most heroic of battles where one punch from a robot (who, admittedly, used to be an aircraft carrier) can smash your hero from one end to the next. If you can see a location, you'll be able to get to it, somehow. This doesn't mean that the action is effectively just extrapolated arena combat either. If you're in a forest level you *are* in a forest, not something more akin to a boxing ring fitted with a few fake plants. Graphically, you couldn't ask for a better treatment, while the controls are, even at this stage, spot on.

Oh, and there's a plot, of course. After The Great War the respective "are we vehicles, are we robots? Ha!" armies decided that their source of power, the Minicons, needed to be buried somewhere in a bid to stop either side using their energy for… you get the idea. Minicons are found on Earth circa 2010, thus a mighty battle ensues and, thus again, you have a reason to locate said Minicons and reap the glory of their hidden power. Or rather, use them to upgrade your weapons. Playing as either Red Alert, Hot Shot or Optimus Prime you can build up your attributes to suit your fighting style to thwart the Decepticon robots-cum-toasters.

Things really are a lot sexier seen through the prism of nostalgia. That said, even without the *Transformers* licence we'd still be looking at a mech game that drops the preposterous seriousness of the genre in favour of a bit of fun and excitement.

**"THIS IS A MECH GAME THAT DROPS THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE GENRE IN FAVOUR OF FUN AND EXCITEMENT"**

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** PlayStation2
**ORIGIN:** Australia
**PUBLISHER:** Atari
**DEVELOPER:** Melbourne House
**RELEASE:** 3 May
**GENRE:** Mecha
**PLAYERS:** 1

What would happen if vehicles could turn into robots? They'd fight.



Our heroes are suitably clad in solid, die-cast- and plastic-looking polygons.


eMag

# RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2

## MOVE OVER MCRAE, YOU'VE GOT A NEW RIVAL

**Ever since its X03 unveiling last September, we've been itching to take the follow-up to *RalliSport Challenge* for a spin.** Fortunately, the wait so far appears to be worth it, and while *RalliSport Challenge 2* isn't going to trouble *Colin McRae* in the realism stakes it promises to deliver an arcade-fuelled experience that makes for a refreshing alternative to the current king of rally racers. Indeed, this sequel has more in common with the classic *SEGA Rally* than it does with Codemasters' current gem, and even with this early preview code it seems that Digital Illusions has managed to correct many of the problems that plagued the original title.

The most noticeable aspect is the re-worked career mode; not only is it structurally superior to its predecessor, but it also allows you to follow several alternative routes in your pursuit of glory. Unlockable bonuses are also in abundance and you'll constantly find yourself returning to the gorgeously organic tracks in order to unlock that next elusive car or circuit. All the original game modes have returned – including the gut-churning Hill Climb – and have been bolstered by the all-new Crossover Duel. These new races see you and an opponent battling furiously against each other for ultimate supremacy, albeit on separate tracks. Digital Illusions has also improved the previous game modes, although the Ice Racing still proves as hard to control as it ever was.

As good as the new gameplay features are, it's the controls that look set to firmly divide opinion here. While we weren't expecting the handling finesse of *McRae* or *Project Gotham Racing 2*, the cars we've tested do seem a little synthetic, although this is probably due to some serious frame-rate fluctuations on certain tracks. But though the controls may be questionable at the moment, we've no problems at all with the new damage physics. Every scrape and crash will damage your vehicle until it's practically wheezing across the finish line. The new physics engine also affects handling and you'll soon find yourself fighting for the wheel on practically every corner.

However, once you've got to grips with the occasionally erratic control system you'll find yourself powering around corners and sliding through time gates like a seasoned pro. There's still a large amount of fun to be had with *RalliSport Challenge 2*, a fact heightened by the game's blinding aesthetics. Texture detail, polygon counts and lighting have all been upped to a ridiculously high level and you'll want to explore every stunning location you visit. It looks like Digital Illusions is aiming for that essential 60 frames-per-second bar and the few levels that have been fully optimised offer an exhilarating ride. You really feel like you're racing in the real world and not some artificial construction that relies on constantly rehashing the same old scenery (we're looking at you, Mr McRae).

*RalliSport Challenge 2* is unlikely to appeal to gamers who like their driving action as realistic as possible, but the inclusion of Xbox Live and the ability to race against seven other players will certainly ensure *RalliSport* attracts some interest. It might feel lightweight when placed up against the likes of *McRae* and *PGR2*, but as far as flat-out arcade racing goes, Microsoft could be onto a winner.

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** Xbox
**ORIGIN:** Sweden
**PUBLISHER:** Microsoft
**DEVELOPER:** Digital Illusions
**RELEASE:** Q2 '04
**GENRE:** Racing
**PLAYERS:** 1-4 (1-8 online)

Digital Illusions returns with the follow-up to its gorgeous, yet ultimately limited, racer. Will the sequel be able to improve on the original?

### A LIVE-LIER UPDATE

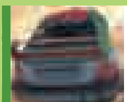
**Gamers wanting a Live alternative to *Project Gotham Racing 2* will be pleased to hear that *RalliSport Challenge 2* will be more than equipped to handle itself online. The first racing game for Microsoft's XSN sports range has plenty of online options and can even force everyone to play with manual gears (very sneaky). Unfortunately, *RC2* appears to have some unwanted competition in the form of an update disc that will allow full online support for *Colin McRae 04*. What's more, it looks increasingly likely that the Codemasters update will hit the shelves ahead of its rival. Whether the new disc will feature fully integrated modes remains to be seen, but it's sure to steal some of Microsoft's thunder.**

"EVERY SCRAPE WILL DAMAGE YOUR VEHICLE UNTIL IT'S PRACTICALLY WHEEZING ACROSS THE FINISH LINE"



There are plenty of real-life locations to race through and all are beautifully recreated.

New environmental effects really help to set the scene – impressive, considering the game's online status.



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

Digital Illusions is based in Sweden and was formed by Andreas Axelsson and Marcus Nystrom in 1988. Quickly becoming famous for its excellent *Pinball* titles (*Dreams, Fantasies* and *Illusions*), it soon moved on to other genres and had a huge hit with the excellent online PC title *Battlefield 1942*.

## HISTORY

- **MIDTOWN MADNESS 3** 2003 [Xbox]
- **BATTLEFIELD 1942** 2002 [PC]
- **PINBALL DREAMS** 1992 [Amiga]

"RACING FANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO THRIVE ON THE EXCITEMENT OF RALLY RACING, HAVE A REAL CHALLENGE IN STORE"

MICHEL CASSIUS, SENIOR DIRECTOR, XBOX PLATFORM AND MARKETING

## VIDEOGAMES MATHS

GET READY FOR THRILLS AND SPILLS

COLIN MCRAE - THE HANDLING + ARCADE ACTION = RC2

*RalliSport's* handling becomes unforgivable in the rain, but at least it all looks nice.

Racing at night really shows off the game's impressive lighting effects in all their glory.

# GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS



The level of detail is impressive – you can zoom the camera in to ground level and get a good look at what's going on.

The terrain and weather affect how battles turn out; some units are hampered or helped by the local environment.

## IT SEEMS REAL-TIME STRATEGY REALLY CAN BE EXCITING

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT:** PC
**ORIGIN:** Sweden
**PUBLISHER:** Vivendi Universal
**DEVELOPER:** Massive Entertainment
**RELEASE:** 18 June
**GENRE:** Strategy
**PLAYERS:** 1-8

Massive attempts to open up the RTS genre to the masses again with this accessible and attractive sequel to the hugely successful *Ground Control*.

**A decent idea might be enough to give you a running start when developing a videogame, but it's not the only thing you need – there's a lot to be said for a healthy dose of enthusiasm.** Thankfully, Massive Entertainment has channelled both into the development of *Ground Control II: Operation Exodus* – a title that demonstrates the team's passion for a genre that wouldn't seem all that exciting to many gamers.

Massive's intention is to open up real-time strategy games to a wider audience. It's no surprise to find that *Ground Control II* is as accessible as RTS games come – the focus is heavily on the action side of things as opposed to the usual slow-paced tactics associated with the genre. A good example of this is the way you manage your troops. Instead of having to build command structures or resource centres, you simply call in a single dropship to deliver units whenever back-up is needed. Naturally, though, which units you can call in are restricted by the amount of Acquisition Points that you earn by slaughtering enemy troops, and it's this cycle that keeps the game moving quickly. The more you kill, the more troops you can call in, meaning you can kill even more and… you get the picture.

If the thought of all this simplicity has RTS fans wincing in pain, they should take heart in the fact that there's still plenty for them to get their teeth into. *Ground Control II*'s 24 missions, spread across many different types of terrain, offer a multitude of scenarios to take on and that's before you even explore the three factions on offer. Whether you play as the righteous Northern Star Alliance, the warmongering Terran Empire or the invading Viron Nomads, each faction has its own unique units and approaches to the game, meaning you'll have to adapt your strategy accordingly. The level of detail contained within *Ground Control II*'s 3D engine is also highly impressive, with the ability to zoom the camera right into ground level giving you a more intimate view of the action and making for some exhilarating viewing.

While we've seen attempts to crack open the RTS genre fail in the past, it's possible that *Ground Control II* might actually have what it takes thanks to the combination of action-based gameplay and traditional RTS elements. Whether the gaming public agree is another matter entirely…

> "DESPITE LOOKING SIMILAR AT FIRST GLANCE, GROUND CONTROL II MANAGES TO IMPROVE ON ITS PREDECESSOR IN PLENTY OF AREAS"



All-out battles can get pretty intense, but the action doesn't make it any more difficult to command your troops.

To ease your transition into the RTS genre, some gorgeous graphics soothe the eyes.


eMag

# BREAKDOWN



At first, you'll have to run from strong enemies, but when your powers return you can get your own back.

**"WE'VE IMPLEMENTED SOME SPECIAL EFFECTS, SUCH AS THE SCREEN SHUDDERING WHEN DERRICK IS HIT, TO BRING MORE REALITY TO THE GAME"**

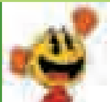
*HIROFUMI KAMI, PRODUCER, NAMCO*

## VIDEOGAMES MATHS

**DON'T BE NERVOUS, IT'S ONLY BREAKDOWN**

HALF-LIFE + FISTICUFFS x "MY BEAUTIFUL EYES!" = BREAKDOWN

The unique first-person viewpoint makes some scenes all the more dramatic, like when Derrick and Alex fall off a skyscraper rooftop.



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

Starting out as an arcade-game manufacturer in the Fifties, the success of the *Pac-Man* franchise in the Eighties allowed Namco to expand into new forms of gaming. The company now not only creates videogames across multiple formats and genres, but also runs two dedicated Namco theme parks in Japan.

## HISTORY

- **R: RACING EVOLUTION** 2004 [Multi]
- **TIME CRISIS 3** 2003 [PS2]
- **SOUL CALIBUR II** 2003 [Multi]



Although most of your enemies can be seen a mile off, others – such as these leech-like parasites – seem to attack from out of nowhere.

## EVER WANTED TO LOOK THROUGH THE EYES OF A GENETIC SUPERFREAK?

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** Xbox
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts
**DEVELOPER:** Namco
**RELEASE:** June '04 (Japan: Out Now)
**GENRE:** Action Adventure
**PLAYERS:** 1

Namco attempts to take first-person gaming to another level of realism, while throwing in a healthy dose of survival horror for good measure.

**Derrick – hardly the name you'd expect for a man with the power to save the world.** But having a rubbish name is probably the last thing on Derrick's mind considering that illegal military experiments have caused his hands to have lightning running through them (allowing him to throw genetically-mutated monsters across a room with a single punch) and occasionally send him into bizarre, delusional dream worlds. And that's just the start of his problems…

Setting itself up as a *Half-Life*-style sci-fi adventure with a thick vein of survival horror running through its genetically-modified core, *Breakdown*'s tale of top-secret experimentation gone wrong isn't anything new; special laboratory develops invincible genetic super-soldiers, said soldiers gain self-awareness, big explosion that lets them loose, blah blah. That said, it does make for some compelling viewing thanks mainly to a combination of Namco's skill at creating atmosphere and the game's biggest saving grace – the camera.

If you're just going on the screenshots, we'll admit that *Breakdown* might look like every other generic FPS out there. Thankfully, Namco's Xbox exclusive holds a few aces up its sleeve that save it from such a fate, the most important of which is *Breakdown*'s unique use of the first-person camera. With the idea that you really *are* Derrick (as opposed to playing as him), it makes sense that the camera should follow his body movements perfectly. Make him pick up something off the ground and Derrick will look down to see what it is, while climbing a ladder makes him look up to watch where he's putting his hands.

It even comes into play when fighting against enemies, particularly when you get hit and stagger backwards; an especially strong punch might knock you to the floor and leave you looking up at the ceiling before scrabbling back to your feet. While this system certainly takes a little bit of getting used to (especially because the default camera settings are particularly fiddly to use), it also helps heighten the tension during key events and cut-scenes. Ever wondered what it might really be like to fall off a skyscraper, rather than just seeing it as previous FPS games have portrayed it? That's just one experience you'll get first-hand.

And then there's the addition of a proper hand-to-hand combat system – something that you might be slightly wary of in a first-person adventure (see the 'Fight Club' boxout). Surprisingly, though, it works rather well. Once you get to grips with it you'll find yourself relying less and less on the use of weapons in favour of your super-human fist-fighting powers. It's good to see a game like *Breakdown* trying something new with a genre that's becoming far too complacent and reliant on graphics over content.

Despite this innovation, we hate to add that *Breakdown* appears to have its fair share of problems. From what we've played, the incredibly linear gameplay is rather inhibiting (you have to follow the path of unlocked doors, meaning there's very limited scope for exploration) and the confrontations – be it with gun-toting soldiers or super-powered mutants – are few and far between. What makes things worse is that while we'd like to say that these concerns might be ironed out when EA publishes *Breakdown* here in June, it's unlikely that Namco will do so seeing as the game's already finished. Will that dampen the anticipation of Xbox owners? We'll see…

## FIGHT CLUB

**The idea of a first-person game that successfully uses a fighting engine as well as the ability to fire weapons might sound unlikely. But *Breakdown* manages to incorporate hand-to-hand combat relatively well and it soon becomes the focus of the action as many enemies can only be beaten by getting your hands dirty, so to speak. The simple system of using the two triggers to represent a weaker left punch and fierce right punch is easy to grasp, but the button combinations used to create a variety of combination attacks (including uppercuts, flying kicks and even a punch/high-kick combo) take some practice to fully master.**

"THE FIRST-PERSON VIEW TAKES SOME GETTING USED TO, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING BECAUSE OF CIRCUMSTANCES OUT OF YOUR CONTROL"

# VAN HELSING


A host of all-new fiendish creations join some of the most recognisable monsters in horror history.

## STOKER'S STAKE-MASTER RETURNS IN A NEW GUISE

PS2 **Call us sticklers for detail, but when we think of Bram Stoker's legendary vampire slayer the image that springs to mind is something quite different from the protagonist in Vivendi's forthcoming movie tie-in.** The slightly menacing, world-weary old man we're used to seeing so brilliantly embodied by the likes of Peter Cushing and Anthony Hopkins has been subjected to a full action-hero makeover in the name of Hollywood's impending blockbuster. This latest incarnation will see the stake-wielding doctor portrayed by the much younger, far more athletic Hugh Jackman. Whatever your thoughts about this action-packed new slant on a literary legend, we have to admit that Jackman's Van Helsing does have rather more potential as a videogame lead than any of his less strapping forerunners.

The game is set to loosely follow the plot of the film, allowing fans to relive all the key moments and ferocious battles from the silver screen while also fleshing out the back story with several new sections. Staged against the atmospheric backdrop of a gloomy 19th Century, players step into the tall boots of enigmatic caped crusader Van Helsing as he ventures deep into the Carpathian mountains to investigate macabre goings on in the notoriously foreboding land of Transylvania.

As you might expect, your tour of the area will take in local attractions like Castle Dracula, where Van Helsing is destined to do battle with his bloodsucking arch nemesis along with a rather less predictable line-up of familiar faces from Universal Pictures' back catalogue of gruesome creations. Here's where things start to get a little harder to swallow as classic monstrosities – including Mr Hyde, Frankenstein's monster and The Wolf Man – make an appearance so our hero can dispatch them in spectacular fashion.

With a host of enticing melee weapons and firearms at your disposal, the double-handed combat system has a whiff of *Devil May Cry* about it, while Van Helsing's acrobatic repertoire of evasive manoeuvres would put Peter Cushing's back out just watching it. Expect the monster mashing to hit consoles in May.

**"JACKMAN'S VAN HELSING HAS RATHER MORE POTENTIAL AS A VIDEOGAME LEAD THAN HIS LESS ATHLETIC FORERUNNERS"**

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** PS2, Xbox
**ORIGIN:** US
**PUBLISHER:** Vivendi Universal
**DEVELOPER:** Saffire Studios
**RELEASE:** 14 May
**GENRE:** Action
**PLAYERS:** 1

The new-look, heavily armed incarnation of Van Helsing spells doom for the Prince of Darkness and his pals.


Van Helsing looks more Brosnan than Jackman, but is still a worthy vampire hunter.

The two-fisted melee and ranged combat is expected to make for some thrilling slaying.


eMag

# EVIL GENIUS

## ELIXIR'S NEW STRATEGY SIMULATION – NOW WITH ADDED 'MWAHAHA' FACTOR

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** PC
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Vivendi Universal
**DEVELOPER:** Elixir Studios
**RELEASE:** Sept '03
**GENRE:** RTS/Simulation
**PLAYERS:** 1

*Dungeon Keeper* meets Austin Powers via henchmen, super-spies and doomsday devices.

**Forget about building amusement parks, hospitals or cities – the ultimate simulation is all about taking over the world.** With influences from trash films like *Fu Manchu* and *Flash Gordon*, games like *Theme Park* and *Dungeon Keeper*, and every brand of humour in between, Elixir Studios' *Evil Genius* is already looking like the kind of RTS that will appeal to more than just the dedicated crowd.

Despite all the obvious comparisons to *Dungeon Keeper*, *Evil Genius* is more than just an Austin Powers clone of Bullfrog's hardcore RTS. For starters, it's far more simulation-based in that you don't have direct control over your minions – instead, you dictate their movements by attaching commands to items in your base. Need some weapons research done? Just click on the relevant equipment and use the in-built menu to select the right research, then the nearest free scientist will move to it to do the job. Got a spy lurking in your control room? Choosing the Capture, Disable or Kill icons from his menu will cause any minion he encounters to leap into action. Building rooms, installing traps and even fending off enemy attacks – it's all done with a few clicks of the mouse, which helps keep things nice and simple when the ensuing action actually looks rather frantic.

Another way of keeping things instantly accessible is through the game's use of a 'click and create' personnel system; you just decide how many of each basic minion you require, then sit back and watch them train themselves. There's also a training tree that lets you move the enhancement of your minions through various stages – you'll have to maintain a good balance of troops, mercenaries, scientists and 'playthings' (attractive Bond-girl types) if you want to keep your evil empire ticking over. While this might sound a bit basic, the fact that you'll be spending much of your time improving your base, expanding your criminal influence and fending off the forces of justice means you'll be grateful for having one less thing to worry about.

Of course, the aim of *Evil Genius* is to lead your chosen villain to glory and construct the ultimate doomsday device to help you conquer the world – a relatively simple task as it's broken down into ten main objectives. Thankfully, any thoughts of the game being too simple or short-lived can be pushed aside, especially once you bring in the possibility of sub-objectives.

"The objectives aren't set goals that only have one solution," says Demis Hassabis, creative director at Elixir Studios. "They're more like pointers as to how you should take over the world, rather than being strict objectives that you might think of as a level. The optional objectives come in if you trigger certain things by the way that you play. If you start taking over South America, for example, you'll trigger the drug cartel sub-objective that you wouldn't normally get if you didn't take that route through the game."

With a planned 15 to 20 hours of gameplay, three different evil geniuses to take charge of, a host of henchmen to command, and many different routes through the game, we're hoping that *Evil Genius* lives up to the potential that it's currently showing in spades. With six months to go until release, things can only get even better.

### SPIES LIKE US

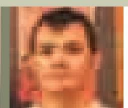
**Although being an evil genius has its perks (the girls, the money, the numerous minions at your beck and call), it also has a downside – namely, the so-called 'good' guys out to stop your fiendish plans coming to fruition. Just what type of hero you'll face off against depends on a number of factors: where your criminal activities have been happening, the amount of heat (i.e. attention earned from committing crimes) you've earned and generally how bad you've been. The worse you are, the tougher the enemies sent to deal with you will be, until eventually you'll have to face off against one – or possibly more – of the super agents each region has to offer. Of course, they might seem invincible at first, but as we all know, every spy has their weakness…**

"WITH A DECENT MIX OF STRATEGY, CREATIVITY AND LAUGH-OUT-LOUD HUMOUR, EVIL GENIUS COULD BE THE GAME TO HELP LIVEN UP THE SIMULATION GENRE"



Need a front for your empire? Secret agents will flock to a casino like tooled-up moths to a flame.

It shouldn't take too long to turn a hollowed-out volcano (or similar) into a hive of evil activity.



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

Despite only being 26, Demis Hassabis has an impressive CV – before founding Elixir Studios in 1998 he had taught himself programming at the age of seven, become a chess master at the age of 12, co-written *Theme Park* for Bullfrog by 17 and been the senior programmer on *Black & White*.

## HISTORY

- **REPUBLIC** 2003 [PC]
- **BLACK & WHITE** 2001 [PC]
- **THEME PARK** 1994 [Multi]

A super-villain needs various forms of transport, so why not set yourself up with a luxury cruiser?

Fallen henchman? Revive him if you like, or just let him go – they're expendable enough in the films…

**"IF EVIL GENIUS HAD BEEN OUR FIRST GAME AND WE HADN'T LEARNT FROM CREATING REPUBLIC, WE'D BE TALKING ABOUT A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT GAME HERE"**

*DEMIS HASSABIS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ELIXIR STUDIOS*

## VIDEOGAMES MATHS

**"WHY MAKE TRILLIONS, WHEN WE COULD MAKE... BILLIONS?"**

DUNGEON KEEPER + DR EVIL x OBLIGATORY PIRANHA TANK = EVIL GENIUS

# SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

## VIDEOGAMES MATHS

NOT ONE FOR FANS OF SUBTLETY

SYPHON FILTER + GUNS - STEALTH = THE OMEGA STRAIN

"IT'S A BATTLE WITH THE DARK SIDE OF HIGH-STAKES ESPIONAGE: HOW FAR WILL GABE PUSH HIS TEAM AND HOW FAR WILL YOU GO TO HELP HIM?"

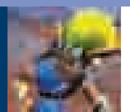
*SCEA PRESS RELEASE*



■ *Omega Strain* kicks off in Toronto but takes you to Belarus, Uganda and Tokyo.

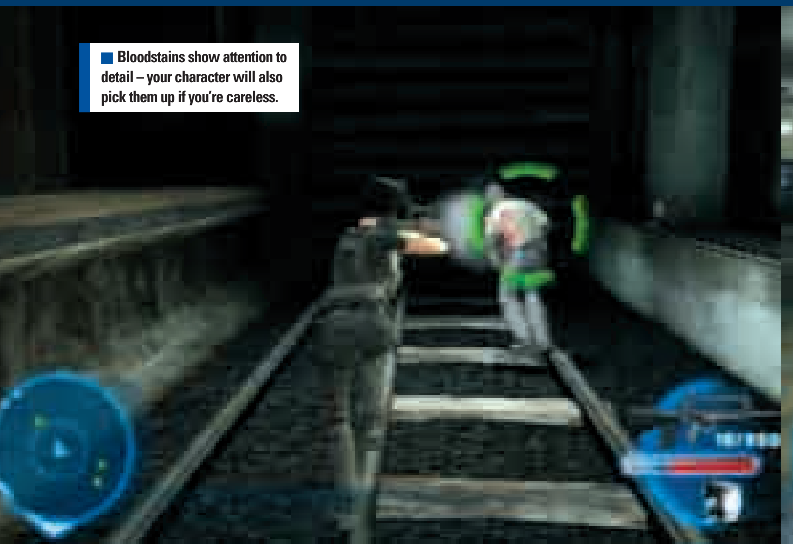
■ The controls are a little awkward at the moment, which puts a damper on the gameplay.

# SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN
PLAYSTATION2



## DEVELOPER PROFILE
■ While publishing many big titles such as *Jak II: Renegade* and *Amplitude*, Sony Computer Entertainment has also shown a penchant for developing quirky games like *Devil Dice, Um Jammer Lammy* and *Ico*.

## HISTORY
■ **THE MARK OF KRI** 2003 [PlayStation2]
■ **ICO** 2002 [PlayStation2]
■ **DARK CLOUD** 2001 [PlayStation2]



■ Bloodstains show attention to detail – your character will also pick them up if you're careless.




■ There are camera issues that need to be ironed out – the spinning view kills the tension of gun battles

## IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, JUST ADD MORE GUNS

### DETAILS
**FORMAT:** PS2,
**ORIGIN:** US
**PUBLISHER:** SCEA
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** TBA (US: April '04)
**GENRE:** Action
**PLAYERS:** 1-4 (1-4 Online)

■ *Syphon Filter* finally lands on the PS2 and charges you with preventing terrorists from releasing a deadly virus.

**In gaming there seems to be an unwritten law that all good things must come in twos.** Don't like *Half-Life*? Maybe *Deus Ex* is your bag. *Gran Turismo* too serious? Give *Project Gotham* a spin. And there's no doubt some of you have been bored to tears by countless *Pro Evo* vs *FIFA* arguments. Of course, the same is true in the world of stealth games, where *Metal Gear Solid* and *Splinter Cell* have so far bagged all the plaudits. This is unsurprising but also rather unfair because *Syphon Filter* has consistently provided quality stealth gaming for the PlayStation without reaching the same level of mass acclaim. Hopefully, *Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain* might be able to redress the balance by ditching the stealth and cranking up the gunplay.

The bad news for returning fans of the series is that Gabe Logan is no longer in the starring role. The hero of the previous instalments has become the head of the Agency (as the ending to *Syphon Filter 3* dictates), meaning that while the world faces another terrorist threat from a deadly virus, Logan is swivelling in his office chair, barking orders and only appearing in the cut-scenes. You'll have to create your own agent to take through the 17 missions, determining characteristics ranging from gender to trivial details such as eye colour.

Now the good news. In order to draw attention away from Solid Snake and Sam Fisher, *Omega Strain* has an ace up its sleeve in the form of co-operative online play. Four players can work together on the missions, and while allies are always helpful when clearing a room, teamwork is essential to progress for some tasks such as nabbing explosives from high areas.

The missions themselves are slightly more basic than you might expect from *Syphon Filter*, lacking the intricate level design and goals that made the earlier games so involving. You might be asked to do anything from eliminating death squads to collecting water samples, but at the moment it feels like little more than traipsing from A to B with constant reference to the map to ensure you haven't missed an essential item. Hopefully, more tasks will be implemented to make the levels feel more exhilarating than a mere survival dash between checkpoints.

Unsurprisingly, it's not just the mission structure that has undergone major surgery to fit its new online shoes, as *Omega Strain* has moved into gung-ho territory. Frantic firefights frequently break out, and with explosive scenery and over a hundred weapons it's clear that Sony isn't overly concerned with *Syphon Filter*'s trademark sneakery. While it's encouraging to see a sequel take such bold leaps into the unknown that could win the series more fans, the controls are screaming out for more attention. Too sluggish to bring the combat to life and too simple to truly engage, we're hoping for more time and attention to be invested in these areas before the release, especially as gunplay is now an ever bigger factor.

With *Omega Strain* geared almost exclusively towards the online mode – and with stiff competition from *Pandora Tomorrow* – it's depending on the co-operative mode to drive Network Adapter sales for Sony and please fans at the same time. It's hard to predict how good this will be when playing alongside human allies, but the heavy online bias certainly makes this one to watch.

### MURDER ON THE DANCEFLOOR
**When assailants are shooting at you from all angles you'll need to use your nifty footwork to save your hide. As always, there's a choice of moves. You can either roll – which should come in handy when you need to scarper behind cover but doesn't carry any real advantages over running for safety – or use the targeting system that locks onto an enemy and automatically turns you to face him. This proves useful when you're caught in the middle of an open area and are surrounded by terrorists, allowing you to quickly deal with the problem, but it's not so good when the targeting system locks onto a threat you can't see instead of the shotgun-wielding goon in front of you.**

> "IT'S ENCOURAGING TO SEE A SEQUEL TAKE SUCH BOLD LEAPS INTO THE UNKNOWN, BUT WE'VE ALREADY GOT SOME GRIPES"

# FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005




Thirty new fields of information and a mugshot help to accentuate each player's individuality.

## SPORTS INTERACTIVE'S BEAUTIFUL GAME HAS A BRAND NEW NAME

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT:** PC
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** SEGA
**DEVELOPER:** Sports Interactive
**RELEASE:** Q4 '04
**GENRE:** Sports Management
**PLAYERS:** 1-16

The celebrated *Champ Manager* game code looks set to continue its dominance of the genre under the new *Football Manager* brand.

**After Sports Interactive's highly publicised split with Eidos, fans could only speculate at what the future might hold for the world's greatest football management sim.** Thankfully, the veil of uncertainty has finally been lifted following the announcement that the game formerly known as *Championship Manager* has found itself a new home in the extremely capable hands of publisher SEGA, and that the first incarnation of the freshly branded *Football Manager* series is scheduled to be on the shelves before the end of the year.

Retaining the peerless game code that has enabled SI to reign supreme in the genre since the early Nineties, *Football Manager 2005* will essentially pick up where the last *Champ Manager* game left off, and looks certain to continue the developer's dominance with aplomb. Yet while anyone with an ear on the gaming grapevine will appreciate *FM 2005* to be the *Champ Manager* we know and love in all but name, Sports Interactive managing director Miles Jacobson admits the loss of such a widely recognised brand and all the connotations of quality it carries will present quite a hurdle for SEGA's marketing department to overcome. "Of course it's going to be difficult to for us to work against the brand that we helped build over the last 11 years," he says. "But we believe that the people who play and love our games look beyond such things and, ultimately, will make their decision based on the respective quality of the games on offer to them."

But while Eidos' forthcoming collaboration with newly formed developer Beautiful Game Studios will no doubt benefit greatly from inheriting the revered *Championship Manager* brand, devising a contender worthy of rivalling the 'real' *Champ Manager*'s unparalleled authenticity and compulsive playability in such a narrow timeframe would be a near miraculous feat for Sports Interactive's latest rival. "They will have to work very hard to maintain the standards that we have set and they are working from a standing start," Jacobson says. "We have a code base and database which has been worked upon and refined for well over a decade, so we have already overcome an awful lot of the difficulties that they are going to face."

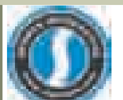
Far from resting on its laurels, however, SI has been working equally hard to ensure *Football Manager 2005* raises the bar higher than ever for the chasing pack, fuelled by a determination to begin the new era with a bang. "We've taken the opportunity afforded to us by the change of name and publisher to take a good look at what we've done in the past, and we've rebuilt the game's look in a way that we believe will be welcomed by our fan base and any new players that we attract," says Jacobson. "Not only that, we have made a significant number of improvements under the bonnet."

The 2D match engine that was so improved markedly for *Championship Manager 03/04* will take another leap forwards thanks to further tinkering, while the classic text commentary system is also set for an overhaul to cater for any remaining traditionalists. With just about every element of play being similarly fleshed out or reworked in response to feedback from fans, *Football Manager 2005* should be a worthy successor to the *Champ Manager* series that takes Sports Interactive's supremacy in the genre to new heights.

## THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

**With such polished foundations already in place for SI to build upon with *FM 2005*, the game will obviously be based heavily on the *Championship Manager 03/04* recipe but with some intriguing additions. Player profiles will feature 30 additional fields of data, while the simple inclusion of a photograph brings them to life much more effectively. Another nice touch is the 2D video footage your scouts will provide of any players you've asked them to follow. Emphasis has also been placed on enhancing the media system, enabling you to engage in manager mind games that can increase the pressure surrounding key fixtures and shape your public image.**

"SPORTS INTERACTIVE HAS BEEN WORKING HARD TO ENSURE FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005 RAISES THE BAR HIGHER THAN EVER"



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

Sports Interactive founders Paul and Oliver Collyer released the football management simulation they'd developed in their bedroom through publisher Domark (now Eidos) in 1992. The developer recently signed with SEGA and will continue to evolve what is now the world's most successful sports management formula under the guise of *Football Manager*.

## HISTORY

- CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4 2003 [PC]
- CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3 1999 [PC]
- CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 1995 [PC]

## VIDEOGAMES MATHS

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

CM 03/04 - BIG NAME x FACELIFT = FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005

# RED NINJA: END OF HONOR



Kurenai's weapon of choice slices through even the toughest samurai armour like warm butter.

'Tis but a scratch… There are some things a plaster won't fix.

## ENDLESS FUN WITH A BIRD AND A WIRE

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT:** PlayStation2, Xbox
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Vivendi
**DEVELOPER:** Tranji
**RELEASE:** Q4 '04
**GENRE:** Action Adventure
**PLAYERS:** 1

Slice and dice your way through feudal Japan with deadly ninja Kurenai and her devastating Tetsugen.

PS2 **Japanese developers are well known for depicting the female of our species – the scantily clad variety in particular – as being far more deadly than the male.** But the alluring femme fatale cast in the lead role of forthcoming stealth action title *Red Ninja: End Of Honor* is quite possibly the most deadly, cold-hearted and downright unladylike collection of pixels we've come across in some time. Admittedly, the reclusive heroine from rookie developer Tranji's debut undertaking was never destined to become the most balanced of individuals after bearing witness to the particularly brutal murder of her father as a small child, placing vengeance against those responsible for the wicked act very much at the top of her life's priorities.

**"EXPECT THE PRECISION USE OF STEALTH TO FEATURE JUST AS STRONGLY AS THE BRUTALLY ELABORATE COMBAT SYSTEM"**

Rescued from a similarly unpleasant fate herself by a helpful passer-by, young Kurenai spent the next few years becoming versed in the ways of the ninja, determined to wreak an exceptionally bloody revenge on the sinister Black Lizard Clan. Set against an authentically atmospheric backdrop of 16th Century feudal Japan, Kurenai's quest for retribution is brought to life in a suitably cinematic story penned by acclaimed Japanese film director Shinsuke Sato. Gameplay promises to be a finely balanced mixture of action, adventure and stealth, with Kurenai's versatile weapon of choice taking centre stage throughout.

Essentially a length of razor-sharp wire tipped with a variety of head attachments, the lethal Tetsugen introduces an intriguingly unique set of combat dynamics that the team at Tranji have perfected with the aid of a specially developed physics engine. The blade attachment will provide some of the most unflinchingly vicious combat moments as the business end of your Tetsugen cleanly severs any piece of anatomy unfortunate enough to be in its path, while affixing an iron weight to the end of the wire enables the more accomplished ninja to actually lynch their prey from any overhead beam or branch.

Yet since a ninja's most valuable weapon is the element of surprise, players can expect the precision use of stealth to feature just as strongly as the brutally elaborate combat system when this enticing dismember-'em-up hits the UK at the end of the year.



Kurenai's ninja powers develop as the game progresses, adding more deadly abilities to her repertoire.


eMag

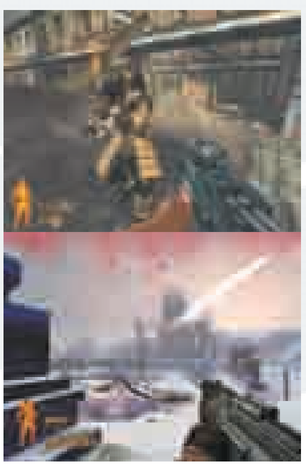
# SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

## World War Zero: Ironstorm

REWRITING THE HISTORY BOOKS

**Format:** PlayStation2
**Origin:** UK
**Publisher:** MC2
**Developer:** Rebellion
**Genre:** FPS
**Players:** 1-2 (Up to 4 online)



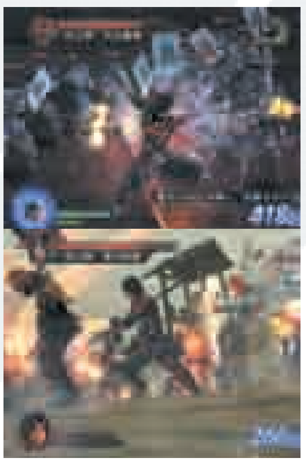
**The intriguing premise of an alternative Sixties in which the First World War was still raging provided a tremendously atmospheric backdrop for 2002 PC shooter *Ironstorm*, yet developer 4X's troubled engine fell some way short of capitalising on its potential.** Encouragingly, UK-based FPS specialist Rebellion has replaced the game's core with technology from the visually impressive sci-fi romp *Judge Dredd: Dredd Vs Death* in bringing the forthcoming PS2 conversion to life. Advanced AI, ragdoll physics and an expanded line-up of 19 missions should give Lieutenant James Anderson's console-based crusade to thwart the plans of evil megalomaniac Baron Ungenberg the edge on its PC counterpart.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '04

## Samurai Warriors

GO NINJA, GO NINJA, GO

**Format:** PlayStation2
**Origin:** Japan
**Publisher:** Koei
**Developer:** In-House
**Genre:** Action
**Players:** 1-2



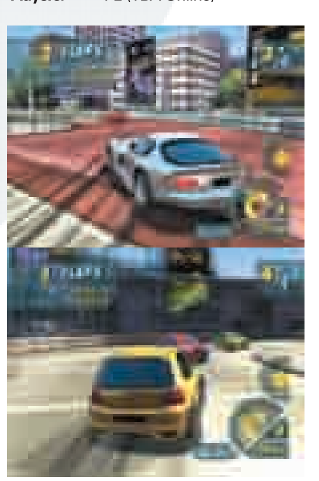
**While the most recent instalment in Koei's enduring *Dynasty Warriors* series served up another treat of hack-'n'-slash battlefield action, we were left questioning how much further the concept could be stretched.** Now, finally, Koei's acclaimed Omega Force studio is turning its attentions away from the ancient Chinese legend to instead bring us a swashbuckling slice of 16th Century Japan. Cast from the tried and tested *Dynasty Warriors* mould, the gameplay and visual style are highly reminiscent of Omega's previous games but with an all-new samurai flavour. Players wage war as Sanada Yukimura or one of his elite followers using an armoury of katana blades, shurikens and other distinctive weapons of the age.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '04
(Japan/US: Out Now)

## Juiced

DRIPPING WITH POTENTIAL

**Format:** PlayStation2, Xbox, PC
**Origin:** UK
**Publisher:** Acclaim
**Developer:** Juice Games
**Genre:** Racing
**Players:** 1-2 (TBA Online)





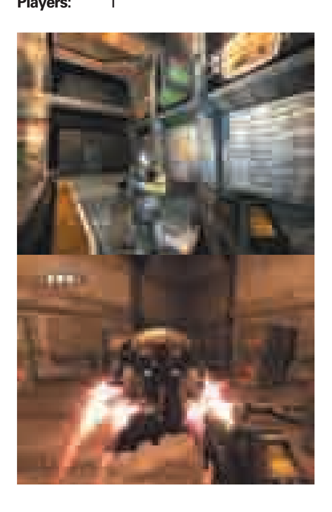
**When the impressive *Lamborghini* sadly bit the dust along with UK developer Rage last year, most of the team stayed in Warrington to form Juiced Games and began work on high-octane racing title *Juiced*.** Combining gameplay elements from simulation and arcade-style racing, *Juiced* offers a variety of events in the *Fast And The Furious* vein of pink-slip street racing. More than 50 licensed cars can be customised to your heart's content with near infinite combinations of real-world aftermarket parts as your cash winnings pile up. There's also an intriguing 'crew-based' element to racing, as your team mates can be called upon to help gain the upper hand against opponents.

RELEASE DATE: September '04

## The Chronicles Of Riddick

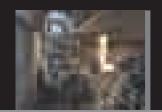
THE GREAT ESCAPE

**Format:** Xbox
**Origin:** Sweden
**Publisher:** Vivendi
**Developer:** Starbreeze
**Genre:** Action Adventure
**Players:** 1



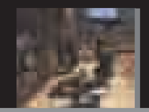
**To coincide with the forthcoming Vin Diesel movie of the same name, Vivendi is bringing the adventures of futuristic antihero Richard B. Riddick to the Xbox in a story that serves as a prequel to the new film and its predecessor *Pitch Black*.** Told as a series of flashbacks, players follow Riddick in his attempt to break out of the Butcher Bay penal facility. Unable to use the guards' DNA encoded weaponry in the game's early stages players must initially rely on stealth and the innovative first-person hand-to-hand combat system, before getting to grips with the kind of firepower that will ultimately see them past the sentries, deranged inmates and security bots that stand between Riddick and the front gate.

RELEASE DATE: June '04



## Delayed – Half-Life 2 [PC]

■ According to developer Valve the most anticipated and infamously delayed shooter of all time will finally be with us some time late this summer. Maybe 30 September will be the magic date after all…



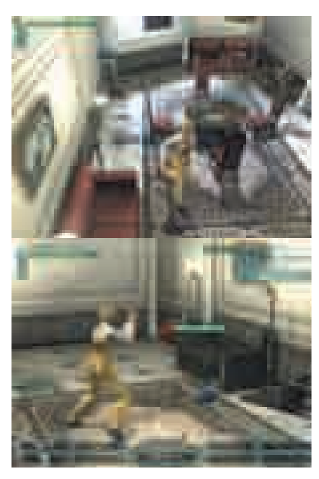
## Delayed – Full Spectrum Warrior [Xbox]

■ Those intrigued by THQ's new breed of military strategy game will have to wait a little longer before tasting life on the frontline, as the hopeful March release date has been put back to early June.

# LifeLine

ANNUNCIATE-'EM-UP

**Format:** PlayStation2
**Origin:** Japan
**Publisher:** Konami
**Developer:** Sony
**Genre:** Action Adventure
**Players:** 1



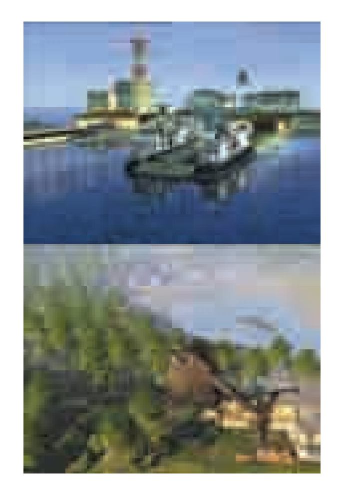
**After gaining a strong following in Japan over the past year or so, Konami's voice-controlled action adventure finally received an English translation and hit US stores in early March.** The game's inventive premise sees the player locked in the security control room of a huge space station following an alien attack, from where they must guide fellow survivor Rio to safety via the station's cameras and public address system. Employing unparalleled voice recognition technology, you control Rio's every step and combat manoeuvre exclusively through your headset – but since the game recognises over 5,000 words and 100,000 phrases there should be no problem getting her to do exactly what you want.

RELEASE DATE: TBA
(Japan/US: Out Now)

# Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising

BATTLEFIELD SOUTH PACIFIC

**Format:** PC
**Origin:** US
**Publisher:** NovaLogic
**Developer:** In-House
**Genre:** FPS
**Players:** 1 (Up to 64 Online)



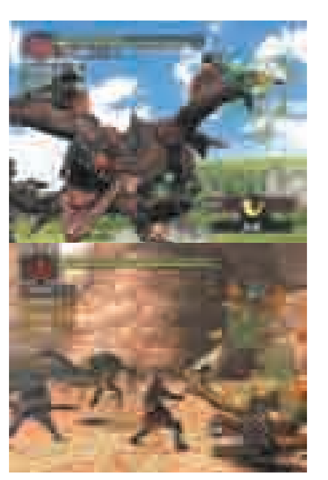
**Electronic Arts' *Battlefield Vietnam* isn't the only multi-vehicular online shooter that will be keeping PC gamers busy this summer, as *Delta Force* developer NovaLogic is bidding for its own share of the limelight with visually stunning contender *Joint Operations*.** Set in the imminent future where a fictional war between Indonesian separatists and an international task force rages around the glorious tropical island backdrops, online play will accommodate up to 64 players and puts a mouth-watering selection of land, sea and air vehicles at each team's disposal. Based on the impressive *Black Hawk Down* engine, the game employs a range of new effects for water and foliage as well as dynamic day/night cycles.

RELEASE DATE: MAY '04

# Monster Hunter

HUNT OR BE HUNTED

**Format:** PlayStation2
**Origin:** Japan
**Publisher:** Capcom
**Developer:** In-House
**Genre:** Action
**Players:** 1 (Up to 4 Online)



**Although an announcement from Capcom regarding a European release date and the inclusion of online content has yet to be made, we're hoping that *Monster Hunter* will be in stores before the end of the year with full multiplayer functionality.** By far the most intriguing aspect of the game, co-operative tactical hunting will enable up to four players to work as a team and develop elaborate strategies to ensnare or bring down their quarry. Magnificent environments, gargantuan monsters and a toolkit of splendidly OTT weaponry should keep the hunt interesting, while the skin, claws and horns of slain beasts can be turned into tougher armour and even more deadly weapons by local craftsmen.

RELEASE DATE: TBA

# Blood Will Tell

COMBO-TASTIC ACTION

**Format:** PlayStation2
**Origin:** Japan
**Publisher:** SEGA
**Developer:** WOW Entertainment
**Genre:** Action
**Players:** 1-2



**Previously announced under the working title of *Dororo*, SEGA's forthcoming 3D slash-'em-up is based on the classic manga saga of the same name.** Penned by Japanese comic-book legend Osamu Tezuka, the creator of Astroboy, the game will follow the action-packed adventures of mighty samurai warrior Hyakkimaru as he attempts to destroy the demons that robbed him of his humanity at birth. Helpfully, the demons responsible left our hero with deadly blades where his arms should be and even a rocket-launcher attachment hidden within his leg. Accompanied at all times by trusty sidekick Dororo, players will slice, dice and blast their way through over a hundred different kinds of beasties standing in Hyakkimaru's path.

RELEASE DATE: TBA




"Punch, kick – it's all in the mind" **Kung Fu Master Arcade [Irem] 1984**


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Live games events seem to have lost their sparkle – trade shows are lacklustre and gamers haven't got much to keep them busy. So what can be done to revitalise the live gaming scene?

# SHOW



VIDEOGAMES may be the preserve of the bedroom or the home-cinema set-up, but nothing beats a gaming get-together, whether it's the huge, industry-only trade show where the latest software and hardware is unveiled, or an intimate convention of like-minded retro fans. But, at one end of the spectrum at least, things seem to be going off the boil. The likes of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) and the Tokyo Game Show have recently been accused of being dull, predictable or lacking substance. Last year, there was no ground-breaking news, no earth-shattering games (only updates of ones we already knew about), and some companies didn't even turn up. As the British games industry prepares to launch new initiatives to get gamers along to live events is it time for the trade-only shows to liven things up by opening their doors to let the public in?

The major criticism levelled at last year's big trade shows was that there was simply

# BUSINESS

nothing new to see, though this isn't necessarily the fault of the publishers and developers. "In this media-savvy world, information is readily accessible, so of course there are fewer opportunities to be surprised – which is what I think is at the heart of most people's criticisms of trade shows," says Simon Byron of Barrington Harvey, the PR agency responsible for promoting the new Game Stars Live and European Games Network events. "You're unlikely to get a scoop these days as the industry is much more media-aware. It used to be the case where you could get a vast amount of industry rumour and tittle-tattle around the various bars. Now it's a press conference with live video and carefully choreographed messaging."

The lack of exciting new hardware also seems to be the major sticking point. Lisa Byron, managing editor of games industry magazine *MCV*, thinks that last year was just too quiet. "I'm not convinced that E3 2003 particularly lacked impact," she says. "But if there was that perception from some it's possibly due to the fact that, aside from the PSP and N-Gage, no major console format was launched." This year's shows promise to be a little different (E3 will see the unveiling of hotly anticipated new hardware from Nintendo, for



instance), but, says Stephen McGill, head of UK marketing for the Xbox, this is unlikely to have been a concerted effort on the part of the manufacturers. "As the major trade shows act as natural 'spikes' across the year, it makes sense to have new announcements coincide with major events," he says.

## Networking works

But while some journalists grumbled about last year's poor turn-out, the people behind the events saw things differently. "The point to remember is that trade events are not just about big



announcements," says Charlotte Fox of Bastion, which co-ordinated the Media Centre at last year's London Games Week. "They're also about conducting business, making new contacts and developing a greater understanding of the industry within which we work." Fox points out that more press and buyers turned up at ECTS than in the previous two years, and Nintendo made a high-profile return to the event after a three-year hiatus (although this much-hyped comeback turned out to be rather disappointing, limited as it was to a lorry parked outside the event hall with little new material to show).




"Without the big players' involvement, maybe this will mean the marginalisation of the trade shows and their extinction"

Trade shows let publishers, developers and the press discuss ideas.

Smaller gaming events, such as retro conventions or Japanese cosplay shows, are popular with fans as they have a very specific focus.

The likes of Eurocon (top left) accommodate as few as 25 people, but are helping to keep the retro scene alive.

## THE SMALLEST SHOWS ON EARTH?

Away from the bright lights and big budgets of the corporate shows, there's a thriving worldwide community of gaming events run by fans for fans. Mostly concerned with retro gaming, the likes of Britmeet and Eurocon are small gatherings of devoted gamers. Eurocon, which is limited to 25 attendees, places an emphasis on pre-1985 consoles and software, and is held at a different location in Europe every other year. "The small scale has the major advantage of giving the convention a unique atmosphere among classic games events as everyone really gets to know each other," says Jon Legg, one of the main organisers. "I think as game fans get older and there's more games to get nostalgic about, we'll increasingly see this kind of event spring up." In a similar, slightly larger, vein, Extreme Computing (an "off-the-radar cyber jumble sale [and] all-day celebration of do-it-yourself technological unusualness") held in June 2002 was a chance for technologically minded sorts to get together to buy and sell hardware and software; discuss the past and future of computing and gaming; and swap their supermarket loyalty cards to confuse store computers…




## Equal exposure

Trade shows can also be beneficial for smaller companies as it can put them on a level playing field with huge multinationals. "A big release might have ten or 20 pods showing the game, whereas a smaller release might have only a single pod in a dark corner," says Ste Pickford, managing director of independent game studio Zed Two. "But you can only play one game at a time and you only need the same amount of time to check out the latest Nintendo or EA release as you do to check out the game without any marketing budget. The bigger players can't dominate the limited floor space in quite the same way as they can dominate shelf space and advertising space – although they do try."

If a giant stand with dancing girls and huge video presentations is inefficient and expensive for bigger companies this may explain why last year's ECTS featured a minimal appearance from some key players. Codemasters, for instance, had a small stand accessible only by appointment, while SEGA and Microsoft's presence was so muted it was almost overlooked. Some people attribute these absences to the fact that, as a British show, ECTS simply doesn't have as high a profile as America's E3. Roger Bennett, director general of the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA), thinks the American event has stolen some European thunder. "ECTS has never been even in the same block as E3 since the latter was launched," he says. "We have therefore seen a serious decline in the value of ECTS, exacerbated by not meeting the changing needs of the industry in Europe."

However, a likely reason why the biggest companies don't lend their full support to industry events is that they prefer to (and can afford to) create their own shows. Three weeks after ECTS, Microsoft held its own press event, X03. Though this show was also criticised for being short on actual news in comparison to the last two years (a few Rare games cancelled? The latest *Conker* game tweaked?), it at least made sure that the media came away with Microsoft on their minds without being distracted by other developers and publishers. According to Stephen McGill, X03 allowed Microsoft to "show [its] latest games and do business with [its] partners in an appropriate forum"– presumably without the worry of a rival company luring people away.

## Private parties

But while the product- or company-specific show is on the increase, it may be some time before it replaces the 'traditional' games show. Smaller companies want to see the continuation of larger shows, as they provide a useful platform. "Without the big players' involvement, maybe this will mean the marginalisation of the trade shows and their extinction," says Ste Pickford. "I think the smaller players benefit enormously from being in the same room or building as Sony, EA, Nintendo and so on for a few days each year."

Reassuringly, perhaps, it seems the big firms prefer to run their own events in addition to trade shows, rather than instead of them. Activision has an annual 'Activate' event where it invites industry figures to see its new products. Tim Ponting, Activision's head of European corporate communications, says that a personalised show isn't any more effective than an event like ECTS or E3. "In my opinion, Activate complements E3 in terms of timing and focus," he explains. "E3 gives us an annual, global platform for our

# THE 2004 CALENDAR

Got some Air Miles you want to use? These are just a few of the games shows being held this year, although you won't be able to get into all of them…

**MARCH 22-26**
GAME DEVELOPERS' CONFERENCE
San Jose Convention Center, California
TRADE ONLY
This conference will host sessions on areas of gaming such as creativity, playtesting and character design

**MARCH 6-7**
CRS
NEC Birmingham
TRADE ONLY
The computer retail show is dedicated exclusively to the PC retail market

**MAY 12-14**
E3
Los Angeles Convention Center, California
TRADE ONLY
Electronic Entertainment Expo, the world's biggest gaming event, celebrates its tenth anniversary

**JUNE 8-9**
ELSPA GAMES SUMMIT
London
TRADE ONLY
The second ELSPA Games Summit will discuss important issues relating to the games industry

**AUGUST 8-12**
SIGGRAPH 2004
Los Angeles
TRADE ONLY
This will be the thirty-first SIGGRAPH conference concerning graphics and interactive techniques

**AUGUST 8-22**
EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL GAMES FESTIVAL
Edinburgh
PARTIALLY OPEN TO PUBLIC
EIGF will be split into conference screenings, game screenings and a public gameplay exhibition

**AUGUST 20-22**
ULTIMATE GAMERS EXPO
Los Angeles Convention Center, USA
OPEN TO PUBLIC
This three-day event will let the American public try out the latest titles for themselves

## CRASHING THE PARTY

With gaming becoming more integrated within mainstream culture, it is inevitable that other events will start to feature games. *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* was premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January, the first time that a videogame has debuted in or around a film festival. The *Splinter Cell* show was hosted by Ubisoft, Xbox Live, and Motorola, and around 200 celebrities (including Sharon Stone, Shannon Elizabeth and Backstreet Boy Nick Carter) turned up to be photographed… sorry, to experience some stealth action. Joystick Junkies, a company that blends fashion, clubbing and videogames into a party environment, has already hosted fashion shows of videogame clothing such as the new *Space Invaders* range. "People always assume you should have to be able to actually play games at games events," says Joystick Junkies founder Chris Birch. "I'd like to see a lot more creative thinking in how to bring games 'culture' into the context of an event."

product line-up shared with the rest of the market, giving access to the broadest possible audience. Activate gives us access to targeted European partners in an environment where they are a hundred per cent focused on our products. [It's] a great pairing."

This method of hammering home your message has been extended to the public too. Prior to the launch of the Xbox, Microsoft arranged tours in Europe, Australia and the US to give gamers a chance to try out the new console. When it comes to targeted events, though, Sony appears to have cornered the market. Launched in 2002, the PlayStation Experience has proved to be one of the biggest consumer-oriented gaming shows in the UK – held as part of London Games Week, last year's show attracted 35,000 gamers in four days. Not only did most gamers go home happy ("huge amount of games to play", "a great goody bag", "loved the atmosphere") but it was useful for developers too. "I think the industry views the event as a very useful tool to raise awareness of their software earlier than they've been able to, and get feedback on what the public think of their game," says Jennie Kong, PR manager for SCEE.

These enterprises don't come cheap, however, and Nintendo has cancelled its Space World event (open to the press and the public) for the last two years running. A troubled Japanese economy isn't helping the situation, but while Nintendo may be counting the pennies, maintaining a high profile through events like this is important. "I think it'd be in [Nintendo's] best interests to start holding [Space World] again, regardless of whether or not the show itself is profitable," says John Ricciardi, a former writer for games magazine *EGM* who now lives in Japan. "Nintendo is always concerned about its bottom line, which is



good, but all too often it doesn't spend enough time trying to keep its image and reputation up with fans." Getting consumers' opinions on a product can be valuable for developers – after all, these people will be buying your game (hopefully) so you can tailor it more to their liking. As Chris Ratcliff, editor of the *Game Guide* directory for retailers, points out: "two hours spent watching people at a consumer event will tell you just about everything you want to know."

## Free-for-all?

With the games media proving to be an unreceptive audience ("I think we're much too miserable," says Simon Byron), would developers and publishers be better off if trade-only shows were opened up to an audience of game-hungry, enthusiastic consumers? The Tokyo Game Show – which is also troubled, having been cut from two shows a year to just one – seems to have a found a happy medium. While E3 and ECTS may remain strictly trade-only, the Tokyo Game Show has just one 'Business Day' set aside for the industry, with the public allowed to attend on the remaining days. However, the idea of making the whole show open to the public may boost revenue, but it isn't popular with everyone. "People in the industry need to be able to check out the games without the hassle of

ECTS is the European E3, but doesn't seem to attract the same high-profile announcements or press coverage.

Trade stands can be costly.



having 4,200 excited kids running around trying to get their hands on everything," says Ricciardi, while Lisa Byron agrees that while multiformat consumer events are a good idea, "the trade and consumer elements do need to remain separate". In the US, the problem has been tackled by devising a solely public event, the Ultimate Gamers Expo in Los Angeles. Offering three days of hands-on previews in the same venue as E3, there's plenty of space and time for excited gamers to see what's new without being asked to move by someone on a deadline.

Attempts to strike a balance between trade and consumer access to new (and old) games are being made in the UK, with London Games Week, the European Games Network (EGN) and the Edinburgh International Games Festival (EIGF) holding events for gamers and the media as well as developers, publishers and retailers. EIGF is perhaps the odd show out, as it focuses less on the hard sell and more on celebrating gaming. Consisting of a series of industry-only seminars, four days of hands-on gaming (for the press and public) and an exhibition of classic and current games at the Royal Museum Of Scotland – timed to coincide with the Edinburgh Festival – EIGF is the most accessible event for all levels of gamer, from die-hard to lapsed casual. "By making the whole festival less technical and far more accessible this can be attractive to non gamers," says Lisa Fox, festival director of EIGF. "It is our belief that the industry feels that the EIGF offers something unique, something to celebrate – basically, a need to communicate the industry to others in new ways. Those attending last year embraced it, but we accept that we have further work to do within the industry – particularly the concept of shedding its corporate persona to enter the spirit of a cultural festival."

Of course, the evolution of exhibitions, shows and other events is something that will take not just time, but plenty of money as well. Whether it's a quality trade show that you're after or the more immediate, yet far more frantic, allure of a consumer event, the perfect combination of elements always manages to elude the organisers. It's just the seemingly impossible nirvana of combining trade and consumer shows that has yet to be reached. The organisers of the fledgling EGN and Game Stars Live hope that they've found a way around this. "It makes absolute sense for exhibitions to court both the trade and consumer," says Simon Byron. "There are very definite economies in hosting these events concurrently, with each serving a very specific purpose… I don't think it'll be half bad for the industry to see how much our gamers care." So while it looks like trade events will keep their doors closed, the companies who are preparing for E3 and the rest of this year's shows would do well to remember that the public want to see what's happening too. Without them, there'd be no industry…

"It would be good for the industry to see how much our gamers care"

Popular titles always create a gaming scrum.

# THE 2004 CALENDAR [CONT.]

**AUGUST 21-22**
CLASSIC GAMING EXPO
San Jose Convention Center, California
OPEN TO PUBLIC
Classic Gaming Expo has relocated from Las Vegas to San Jose to cope with increasing demand

**AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 3**
GAME DEVELOPERS' CONFERENCE
Earls Court, London
TRADE ONLY
Serious issues facing games developers are addressed via lectures, tutorials, panels and round tables

**SEPTEMBER 1-3**
ECTS
Earl's Court, London
TRADE ONLY
Britain's answer to E3 returns and the trade-only show will once again take place in Earls Court

**SEPTEMBER 1-3 (TBC)**
PLAYSTATION EXPERIENCE
Earl's Court, London
OPEN TO PUBLIC
Unlike ECTS, the PlayStation Experience allows the public to try out the latest PlayStation2 titles

**SEPTEMBER 1-5**
THE EUROPEAN GAMES NETWORK/ GAME STARS LIVE
Excell, London
PARTIALLY OPEN TO PUBLIC
ITV's Game Stars will once again search for the UK's greatest gamer and host an awards show

**SEPTEMBER 9-10**
AUSTIN GAME CONFERENCE 2004
Austin, Texas
TRADE ONLY
Austin Game Conference focuses on online multiplayer and next-generation games

**SEPTEMBER 24-26**
TOKYO GAMES SHOW
Nippon Convention Center, Tokyo
PARTIALLY OPEN TO PUBLIC
Japan's biggest gaming event expects up to 150,000 visitors this year



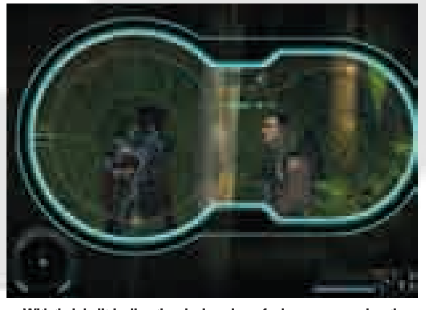
# REVIEWS



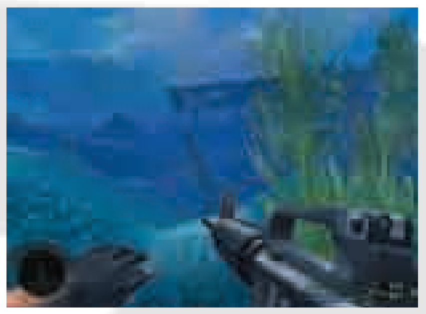
# THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below seven (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five, you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad, we'll make sure you know; if it's great, we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.

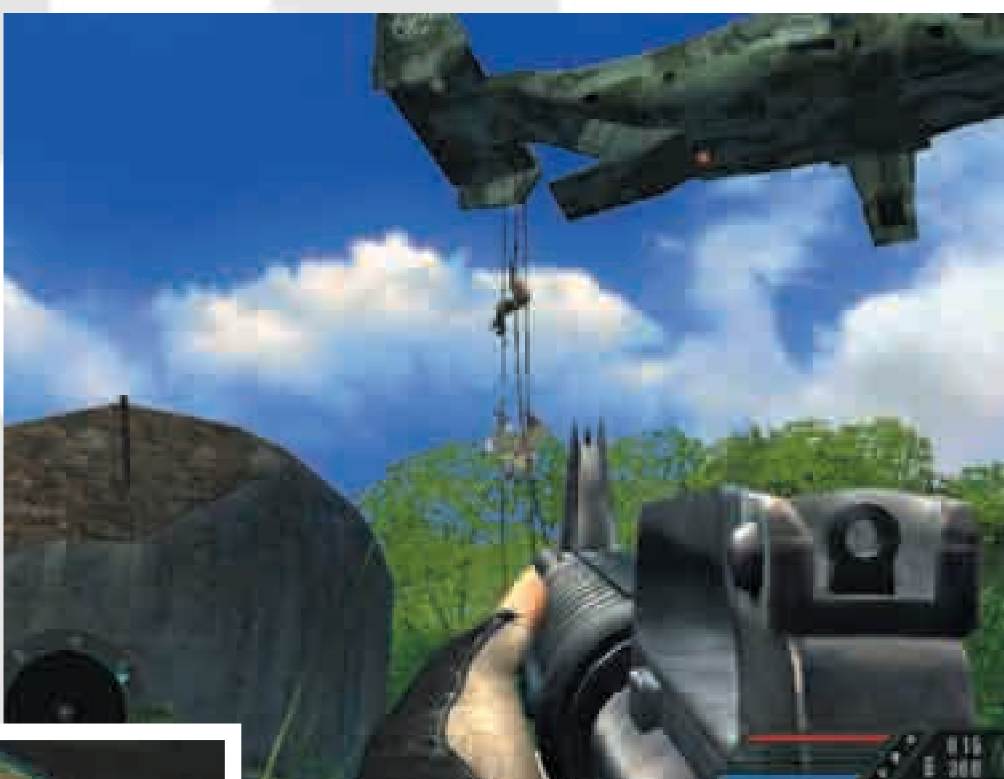




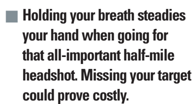
With their built-in directional microphone for long-range spying, the binoculars are an essential piece of kit.



If all else fails, you can always dive into the warm tropical sea to try and conceal yourself…







Holding your breath steadies your hand when going for that all-important half-mile headshot. Missing your target could prove costly.

**games™**

## FINGERPRINT

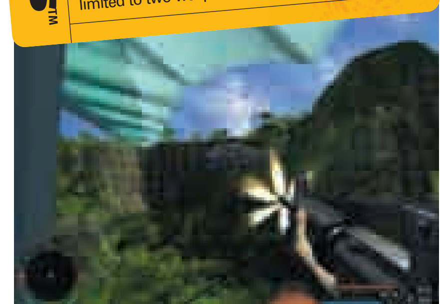
### WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**FREEDOM:** See that jungle? You can get out and explore it at your leisure.

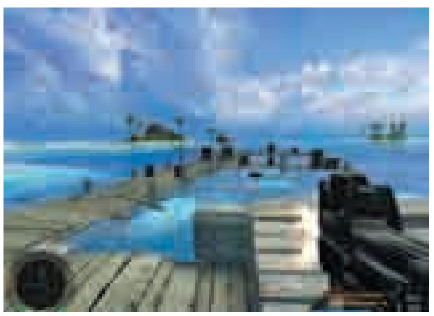
**BIGGER POCKETS:** While Master Chief was limited to two weapons, Carver can carry four.



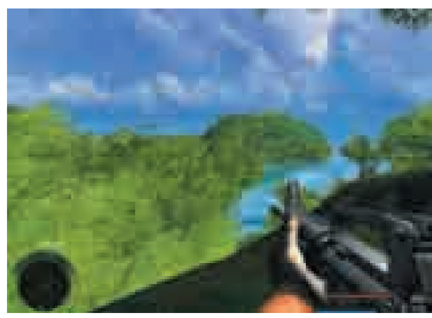
Your destination? That satellite dish way up in the mountains. Here's hoping you packed supplies…



Hang-gliding down a canyon while gunning down a helicopter – Carver's life doesn't get any easier.



The Q and E keys allow you to peek out around scenery and fire off a few cheeky rounds from relative safety.



The dense flora makes up some of the most convincing natural environments ever seen in a game.





DETAILS

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PC

**ORIGIN**
Germany

**PUBLISHER**
Ubisoft

**DEVELOPER**
CryTek

**PRICE**
£29.99

**RELEASE**
26 March

**PLAYERS**
1 (1-32 online)

**MINIMUM SPEC**
1GHz processor, 256Mb RAM, 4Gb hard disk space, 64Mb 3D Direct-X 9 compatible graphics card

INTO THE GREAT WIDE OPEN…

# FAR CRY

**When was the last time you were genuinely stunned by a game?** Not just 'Ooh, look at the pretty water' or 'Whoa, nice graphics!' either; we're talking absolutely blown away by the whole package. With so much lending and borrowing of ideas going on in not only the FPS genre but the industry as a whole, games with the potential to impress to this extent are becoming increasingly rare. Arguably, the ability to make a bundle of familiar concepts feel like a brand new property is as commendable as producing a wholly original product, which would explain why something derivative yet highly polished (allow us to cite *Halo* for the first of several times) receives as much acclaim as innovative and progressive titles like, say, *Half-Life*. Ubisoft has really made its mark over the last year or so, following the guidelines to the letter to make impeccable stealth and adventure titles, and it's gone back to its recipe book one more time – so how close can *Far Cry* come to its creators' vision of perfection?

In the perfect game, no character would ever glitch through a piece of scenery, there would be no such things as slowdown or pop-up, and frame rate would never be called into question. We're sure it doesn't need to be said that this standard is still generations away, but by today's relatively humble benchmarks *Far Cry* stands up very well indeed. Treading a fine line between jaw-dropping realism and high-res synthetic sheen, you can't help but be impressed by the composition of the environments, and if your PC is speedy enough you're in for a real treat. Sure, there's the odd glitch here and there and a little fogging on some stages, but in a title so ambitious it would be a miracle for a big game to emerge otherwise, especially in the easily updated and patch-riddled world of PC gaming. All things considered, *Far Cry* is definitely up there with the most solid titles in the PC catalogue.

In the perfect game, you'd be able to look out over a landscape safe in the knowledge that every bit of the terrain was yours to explore. Within reason, *Far Cry* is probably the closest thing we've seen to this dream and, apart from the steepest of surfaces, protagonist Carver can clamber to the very summit of most areas and skulk around the tunnels and complexes below sea level. With the assistance of a plethora of controllable vehicles, almost every glorious inch of the island is within your reach. To complete the illusion, you'll encounter all manner of inhabitants on your way to your destinations, from heavily armed thugs to a whole host of wildlife, and it's this attention to detail that actually rewards players who are willing

## EVERYONE'S HAPPY UNDERGROUND

**As you progress through the islands you'll quickly discover that hidden away among the mountains and foliage of this tropical haven is an incredible string of industrial complexes, research facilities and hideouts. Each is packed with exactly what you'd expect – plenty of ways to die. These sections add a bit of much-needed diversity to what would otherwise be one of the greenest games ever made and hark back so much to the days of *Half-Life* that it's uncanny. Of course, when was the last time that a comparison with *Half-Life* was a bad thing?**





While not perfect, the driving sections work pretty well and you're able to easily shoot and drive at the same time.

### "WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF A PLETHORA OF CONTROLLABLE VEHICLES, ALMOST EVERY GLORIOUS INCH OF THE ISLAND IS WITHIN REACH"

to take the scenic route to an objective. Occasionally this freedom can be taken a little too far – it's sometimes possible to avoid key confrontations by cutting around or over them, which isn't a fault per se but can mar the game's pacing a little.

Perfect AI is somewhat harder to pin down, requiring every single enemy or NPC to have their own agenda and react to your actions accordingly. Primitive yet incredibly functional versions of this are currently leading the way, such as *Halo*'s unit hierarchy, but *Far Cry* does what many before it have also tried with relative success. Squad-based intelligence means that alerted guards will often run to sound alarms or otherwise alert their comrades and will even sneak behind scenery and cleverly gang up on you. Worryingly, they're pretty good shots too (as you'd hope a hired gun would be, really) so if you go running into a hive of activity, you can expect to wind up dead. There is a slightly troublesome trend among enemies to prioritise mounted guns above all else, again nothing major but still something of an oddity.

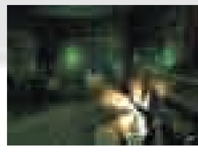
The perfect game should have the ability to absolutely immerse the player into its world, make them believe everything it tells them and forget about the 'real world'. Once you start having to find your way past huge numbers of armed guards, *Far Cry* manages to hit a similar level of tension as Ubisoft's other big title, *Pandora Tomorrow*. Even in the more linear environments the same atmosphere remains, this time more so because you know that each corner could hide the very definition of 'outnumbered' and 'outgunned'. Without the bane of PC gaming (the evil Quicksave 'save anywhere' function), your only way to save progress is a series of well-spaced checkpoints. This greatly adds to the pressure and tension but also makes for a few very frustrating stretches – certain areas can be made nigh-on impossible if you reach a checkpoint with less than your quota of health. Cue the frustration factor, and even the slightest blip in your patience or attention can lead to an often-fatal disaster.

Even harder to pin down perfectly is the correct balance of gameplay and narrative – we often get subjected to horribly misbalanced packages (which don't necessarily make for bad games), but with today's complex physics engines and scripting the cinematic in-game moments that really made (and still make) *Half-Life* stand out can be produced easily and plentifully. An intricate ragdoll physics system allows for all manner of crazy death throes and also means that if something isn't bolted down

## 24:00 TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

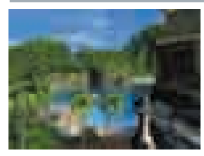
**THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM**

**ONE DAY**



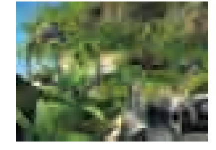
Having spent a good few hours installing the game, it only takes a minute to realise your ageing PC can't take the strain. All display options are set to low. The shame…

**ONE WEEK**



A midweek trip to the PC doctor sees your 'inadequate' machine turned into a powerhouse – playing *Far Cry* as it was intended is an absolutely incredible experience.

**ONE MONTH**



Even with the single-player campaign finished (although you'll be going back to certain areas), the multiplayer potential makes us forget about *Half-Life 2*…



The size of your crosshair reflects accuracy – keep still for results.



No, it's not *Doom III* but some of the enemies do seem like they belong in some infernal dungeon.

**FAQs**

**Q. WHY THE HAWAIIAN SHIRT?**
Carver ends up on the islands after his boat-for-hire is attacked by mercenaries, leaving him stranded with one outfit.

**Q. WHY SO SHINY?**
The game feels a little synthetic but this slips into insignificance in the heat of a chase or battle.

**Q. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO UBISOFT?**
Something in the water in France? *Far Cry* will end the firm's exceptional run of form and leave us gagging for a great E3 showing.

CHROME



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



HALO

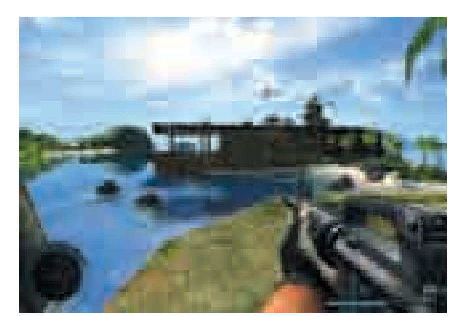
## TWO TO THE CHEST

**As much as we love the majority of *Far Cry*, there are still areas that frustrate. One of the main ones is what would best be described as '*Red Faction* syndrome' whereby enemies have the mysterious ability to absorb an alarming amount of bullets, though it's far from the worst case we've seen. The fact that many enemies sport bullet-proof vests goes some way towards being an excuse, but, thankfully, shooting them in less well-padded areas takes them down a whole lot easier and, as should be the case, a single bullet to the head will be enough to drop a man. It's even possible to fell a precarious sniper by unbalancing him with a high-powered rifle; a well placed cap can easily rip the (rather dangerous) bird from his perch. As good as *Far Cry* is, though, a better feeling of impact and mortality could have raised it into the top flight.**

you can probably move it, and in the heat of a battle, objects such as crates, barrels and furniture often get blown up or knocked down randomly. This frees up actual cut-scenes to do their bit on the narrative front and keep you up to speed on the swerving plot which starts out feeling scarily *Jurassic Park 3*-ish and ends up as something much, much more. Something good.

By far the furthest thing from perfection that you find in *Far Cry* is the same flaw that tarnishes many similar titles. An inability to maintain suspense and pacing within the realistic settings that give the game its unique feel means that it isn't long before the action slips from stealthy and tense sneaking around an island into more traditional corridor-based blasting. While this is a shame, the core gameplay remains more or less as solid regardless of setting, making this less of a criticism and more of a wistful 'could have been'. There are plenty of knowing nods towards *Halo* and *Half-Life* as Carver ventures deeper and deeper into the island 'paradise' and the separate sections are sufficiently split up so as to keep a good balance of action.

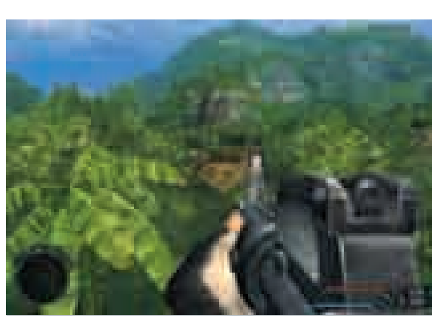
The perfect game is a pipe dream, an unachievable ideal that can never exist due to the massively subjective nature of the medium. Just like there will never be one song that unites



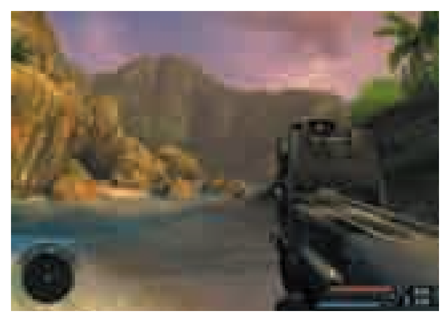
the world in appreciation, or one opinion that everybody holds without exception, no one game will ever appeal to everyone on every level. As we've hopefully pointed out, many elements of *Far Cry* are painfully close to being worthy of such praise, but the sheer ambition and scale of the project means that everything does not go down without a hitch. While *Far Cry* may still be a fair way off FPS perfection, it does represent both a staggering achievement and a massive leap in the right direction and, as such, is deserving of our respect, our recognition, our money and our time.



**VERDICT 8/10**
ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GAMES THIS YEAR



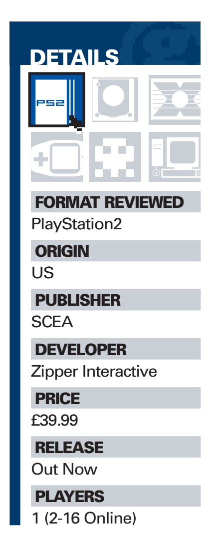
The islands are littered with small camps such as these, which can be home to a disturbing amount of mercenaries.



The lighting is the key to the beautiful landscapes, a point exemplified by this gorgeous dusk shot.





**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
SCEA

**DEVELOPER**
Zipper Interactive

**PRICE**
£39.99

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1 (2-16 Online)

STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES – EVEN IN THE NAVY SEALS

# SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS

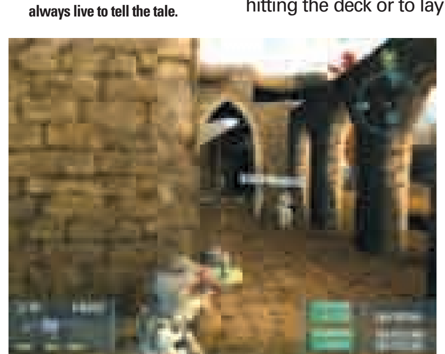
**Remember the original *SOCOM* and that buzz once you realised your troops responded to the commands you shouted through the headset?** It was those first impressions that helped turn an average game into a sleeper hit, and it became Sony's only real defence against the Xbox Live onslaught. So you'd presume that the sequel would make sure the opening few minutes at least grabbed your attention. Instead, you start the game in a dreary brown field playing what seems to be an unremarkable tactical shooter. How accurate first impressions can be…

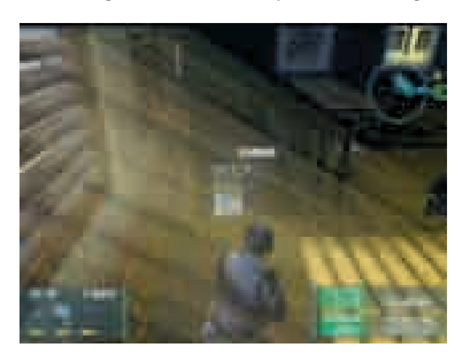
As with the first game, you control SEAL commander Spectre and you can boss around the three soldiers beside you via the command menu or the USB headset. The orders themselves are comprehensive enough to cover any scenario, whether you want your team to avoid detection by hitting the deck or to lay down covering fire for advancing units. While a little daunting at first, you soon get used to being in charge and find yourself formulating elaborate plans to take out enemies quickly and quietly. By far the most enjoyable aspect of the game offline, the controls are smooth and well-suited to issuing orders and taking care of your own hide.

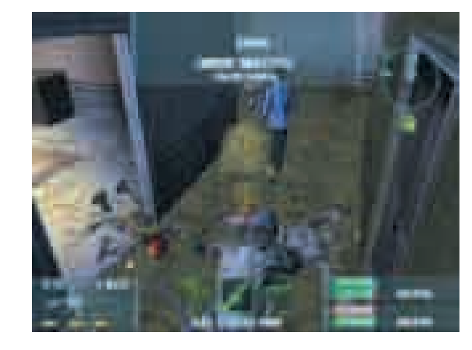
It's a shame you spend most of *SOCOM II* guiding your team through clichéd assignments – blow up building X, meet informant Y – but the open routes towards your targets and constant encouragement to use stealth keep the game interesting where the storyline fails, giving you plenty of scope for improvisation when deciding how to employ your team members. The problem is that these missions have to be tackled in sequence, but there are bonus objectives to try to hide the linearity. It just about succeeds in masking the A-to-B nature of *SOCOM II*, but the bonus objectives don't disguise how unclear some

The best tactic is to send teammates ahead while cowering behind. Cowards always live to tell the tale.

Not only does your informant Ragbag get captured, he then panics and scarpers once you rescue him. Cheers, Ragbag.







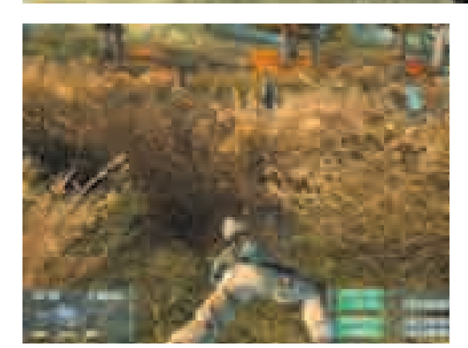
**games**™ **GLOBAL**

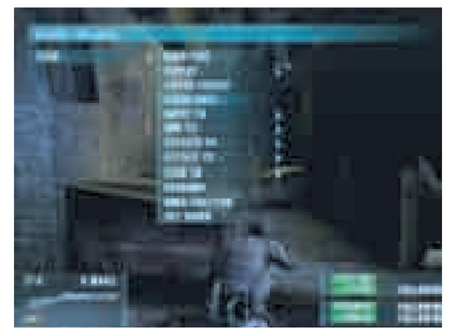
TAKING GAMING ONLINE

**ESCORTS:** New online modes see you attacking and defending bases, and protecting hostages.

**FINDERS CHEATERS:** The first game was plagued with cheaters but *SOCOM II* is a tougher nut to crack.



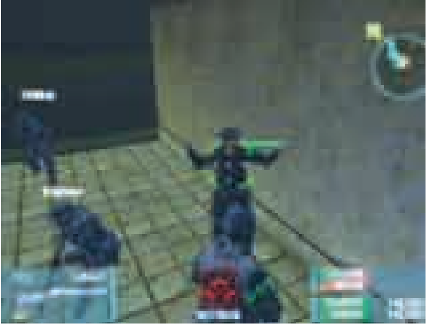




If you don't use the headset, issuing orders can become tedious as your team needs constant management.

## THERE'S NO AI IN TEAM

**While bossing about your squad of Navy SEALs is fun, you soon realise these ruthless assassins have the collective intelligence of pond life. While the troops perform most commands with textbook accuracy, there are key lessons they missed while at military academy. Ladder descending is one – this confuses the soldiers to the point that they give up and plummet to their deaths. Ask a squad-mate to deploy a frag and he'll take out half your team by rebounding a grenade off the wall next to him. The only way to avoid this is by guiding your squad through these manoeuvres step by step. There are times when *SOCOM II* has more in common with *Lemmings* than a tactical shooter…**



Sometimes you're required to escort hostages, which adds even more dubious AI to your list of problems.

objectives are – mission descriptions are so brief that when you get stuck there's little else to do except embark on long bouts of trial and error.

More minor niggles emerge as you battle on. Controlling your team can be very satisfying when your squad carries out orders with the military precision you'd expect, but all too often it feels as though you're herding naughty school children on a day out. You have to babysit them to make sure they don't take detours that will alert nearby guards, or accidentally kill a hostage, thereby failing the mission. Worse still, there aren't any mid-level checkpoints, so if you fail a compulsory objective you go back to the start. This leads to an endless cycle of frustration, as an urge kicks in to throw caution to the wind and blast your way back to where you died – which will only get you killed because of careless blunders.

Unsurprisingly for a game that's tried to wrap a single-player mode around its online design, *SOCOM II* needs to be hooked up to a Network Adapter before the gameplay registers a pulse. By introducing human opposition, the game soars without the sloppy AI. The sub-par graphics are justified by the smooth online play and the headset becomes crucial rather than an indulgent novelty. Even trivial details, such as the disappearing dead bodies, make sense in the context of the online game. Broadband junkies who enjoyed the original *SOCOM* will be pleased to learn that along with the new weapons and modes, Zipper has also included revamped maps from the first game. While playing online still feels unpolished and glitchy, there's plenty here to keep broadband gamers happy. But for the Adapterless, *SOCOM II* is merely a prolonged advert urging you to go online.

We can't help feel this game deserves better; that Sony should have better prepared its overachieving child for its second run at online domination. Sadly, it's still the average game that *SOCOM* was, and without any novelties to paper over the mundane gameplay it's hard to see this repeating the success of its predecessor.

### FAQs

**Q. I'M NOT WEARING THAT HEADSET…**
You should. It lets you bark orders at your squad and receive objectives through the earpiece.

**Q. IT RECOGNISES EVERYTHING I SAY?**
As long as you don't talk with food in your mouth, which is rude and should never be done anyway.

**Q. BUT ISN'T SHOUTING ORDERS… EMBARRASSING?**
Those who feel uncomfortable shouting at a TV screen can use the command menus. But remember – dignity counts for nothing in war.




SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS



JUST LIKE

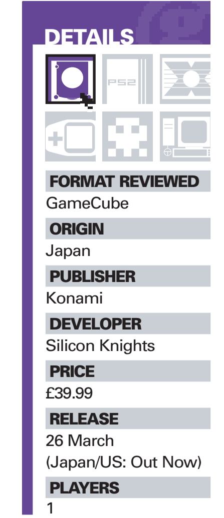
WORSE THAN



CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II



The action-packed cut-scenes provide some truly intense moments – this is one of the best.




**FORMAT REVIEWED**
GameCube

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Konami

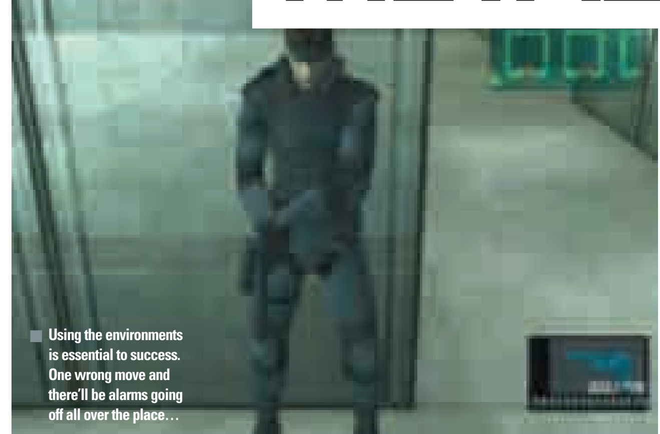
**DEVELOPER**
Silicon Knights

**PRICE**
£39.99

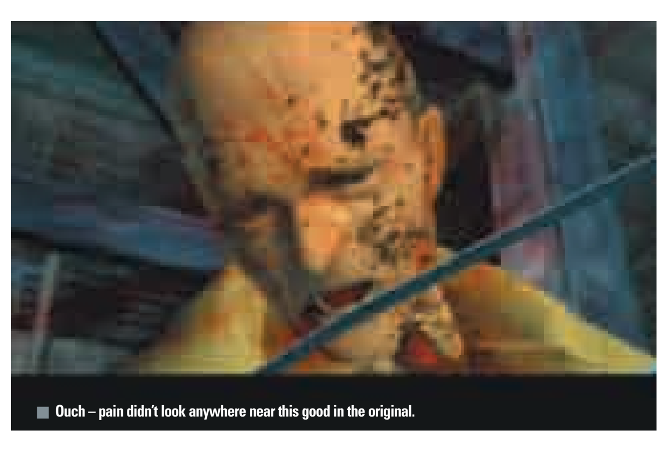
**RELEASE**
26 March
(Japan/US: Out Now)

**PLAYERS**
1

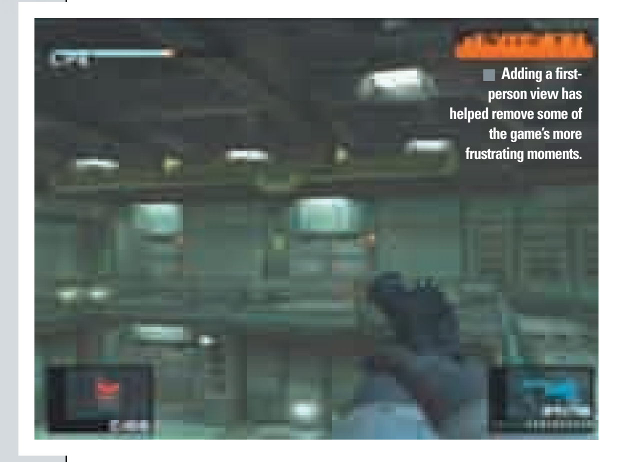
# METAL GEAR SOLID:



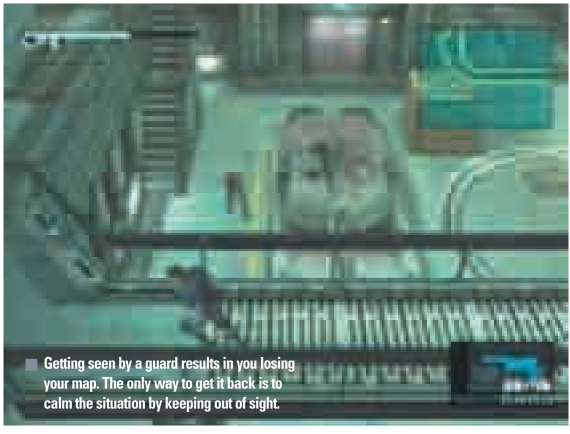
Using the environments is essential to success. One wrong move and there'll be alarms going off all over the place…



Ouch – pain didn't look anywhere near this good in the original.



Adding a first-person view has helped remove some of the game's more frustrating moments.



Getting seen by a guard results in you losing your map. The only way to get it back is to calm the situation by keeping out of sight.



games™

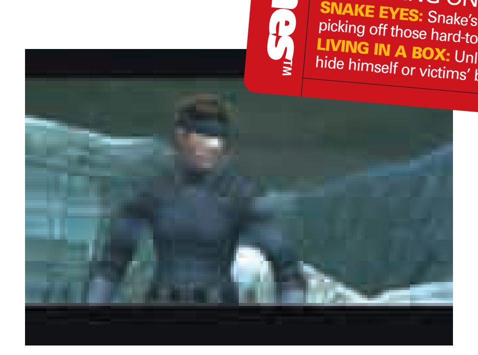
# ENHANCED

## IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

**SNAKE EYES:** Snake's first-person view makes picking off those hard-to-see baddies infinitely easier.

**LIVING IN A BOX:** Unlike the original, Snake can hide himself or victims' bodies in the lockers.





**The stealth genre is a delicious pie that everyone seems to be serving these days.** Whether we're treated to a *Pandora Tomorrow* juicy wedge or a *Rogue Ops* crusty bit, we're having it shoved down our throats one way or another. Not that we mind, of course – we can't get enough of crouching behind crates and tip-toeing through laser tripwires. Worryingly, breaking a guard's neck while he sleeps is no longer considered immoral and you'd be a fool to consider using a firearm that wasn't equipped with a silencer. Why? Because of *Metal Gear Solid,* of course. It's been six years since the PSone classic wowed the crowds and now, for an eager (and patient) GameCube-owning public, it's being presented again with several bells and whistles attached to its ridiculously low underbelly.

# THE TWIN SNAKES

## CAN YOU TEACH AN OLD SNAKE NEW TRICKS?

As the first game of the series to make it to the GameCube, it's nice to see that some effort has been put in to make sure the game pulls its weight. The CG action, for instance (and there's plenty of it), has been completely redone and has been overseen by Japanese film director Ryuhei Kitamura, which makes for some truly memorable fight scenes. The voice acting has all been re-recorded and the whole package has been given a vigorous buffing. Unfortunately, not all this buffing has worked. The game's colour palette is now rather washed-out, and while the visuals are improved, they're not what you'd expect from a game that's been ages in development. Not that you'll be able to tell very often, however. Despite the improvements, the game's camera remains resolutely distant and keeps opportunities to examine Snake's intimate details to a minimum.

As with *MGS* and its sequel, *MGS2: Sons Of Liberty*, the controls leave a little to be desired; the fixed camera will take a while to get used to and it'll take you some time before you're expertly traversing the environment and using it to its fullest. Until you get the knack of keeping one eye on the map and the other on the action at all times, you'll be eyeballed by every guard and camera that's thrown at you. Annoyingly, Snake's ability to suddenly step out in front of a group of armed guards when he's meant to be hugging a wall is matched only by his inability to crawl like a normal human being, and first-time players are likely to suffer numerous untimely deaths due to Snake dropping to the floor and writhing about for a bit, all because of an instinctive button tap.

Although this is essentially the same game as *MGS*, there are some new additions other than the audio and visual enhancements. Snake's abilities from the original have been supplemented and he can now hang from rails to avoid detection as well as having the always-useful first-person view to fall back on when the fixed camera angle makes taking out an enemy from afar nigh-on impossible. Ideas used in the seminal *MGS: Sons Of Liberty* – like hiding in lockers and dog-tag collecting – have been dragged across and provide new opportunities and puzzles that weren't in the first game.

Of course, the tough decision here is whether you should grudgingly lavish your hard-earned cash on a shinier version of a game you completed half a decade ago. Admittedly, the gameplay that made *MGS* a classic originally is still there and has been touched up accordingly to suit today's more demanding market. If it's just nostalgia you're after, though, you could probably pick up the original and a second-hand PSone to play it on for under £20 – it won't be pretty, but it will be a similar experience. Naturally, those of you who, for whatever reason, haven't played the original then this is your chance to see what you've missed in its improved state. For the rest of us who've been here so many times before, though, it might be harder to part with so much cash for such meagre innovation.

### FAQs

**Q. WORTH PLAYING AGAIN?**
Depends if you're a newcomer or not. But seeing your favourite characters in the new cut-scenes is quite nice.

**Q. HOW LONG ARE WE TALKING?**
If you've played the game before, not that long. But then there's still a few new things to see and do.

**Q. IMPROVED CUT-SCENES?**
Certainly, thanks to the involvement of Kitamura-san. If it wasn't for these, we wouldn't be so keen.

### WHO'S THE BOSS?

**Facing off against *MGS*'s bosses is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the game. Each boasts their own personality and a technique that you'll need to crack if you want to stand a chance against them – some require precision grenade-throwing skills, while others force you to perfect your aim. Better yet, each has their own place in the story, and watching the cut-scenes before and after the battle will give you more insight into what makes them tick. It's worth the effort of painstakingly sneaking around the levels just to see who or what is coming next. Unless you remember them from the first time you played the game…**



**VERDICT 7/10**

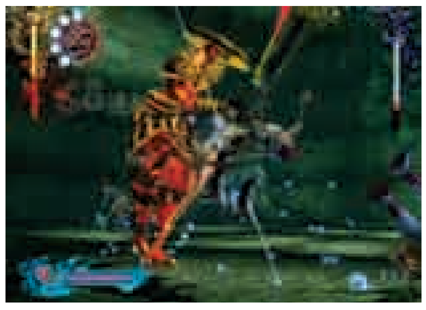
WORTHY, BUT BETTER IF YOU'RE NEW TO THE SERIES

**games™ FINGERPRINT**

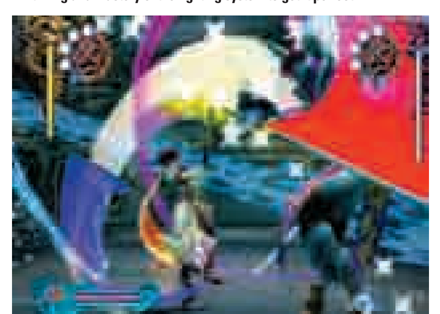
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**COMBO CRAZY:** Despite looking like a basic hack-and-slash affair, *Bujingai* has great depth.

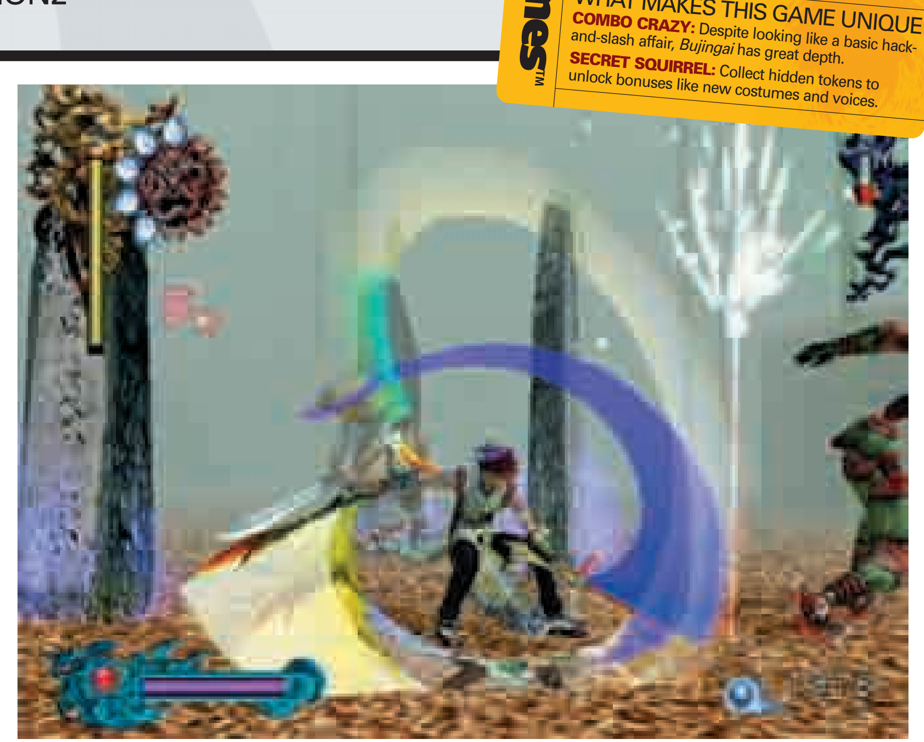
**SECRET SQUIRREL:** Collect hidden tokens to unlock bonuses like new costumes and voices.



Maintaining your combo chain can get pretty tough; it takes great timing and mastery of the fighting system to get it perfect.



Boss fights can get incredibly frantic, particularly later on.



Lau's physical characteristics are based upon a Japanese musician known as Gackt – according to our sources, he's 'very popular indeed'.

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Taito

**DEVELOPER**
Red Entertainment

**PRICE**
¥6,800

**RELEASE**
TBA (Japan: Out Now, US: May '04)

**PLAYERS**
1

WAIT – THIS IS MORE THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

# BUJINGAI

**Never judge a book by its cover. It's a cliché, but one that sums things up nicely when talking about *Bujingai*.** Just as *Ikaruga* fooled many people not too long ago, this is one of those rare titles that's not what it first appears to be.

Placing you as Lau – a sword-wielding hero with a decent repertoire of hacks and slashes under his belt – the idea of sprinting mindlessly through each level while slaughtering anything in your path couldn't be any simpler, and so rather obvious comparisons with games like *Otogi* and *Shinobi* can be drawn. What's surprising, though, is that despite having come out of nowhere, *Bujingai* manages to best its puddle-deep competitors by building on that simplicity with an intricate combo system – not that you'd notice it at first, given that simple button bashing tends to produce enough sword-flailing to see you past most enemies.

Venture into the complexities of the tandem combo/power-up system and things really get going. What's more, it's not actually that tough to pick up – the ability to target enemies, start basic chains and then switch targets in mid-flow only uses a couple of buttons, putting much of the skill in the timing. Once you've mastered the basics, you can start being more adventurous thanks to Lau's flexibility of movement (he can run up walls, boost through the air and perform all manner of magical attacks) and the counter ability that allows you to turn an enemy's strike into an offensive flurry of your own. You can also use the Spirit Orbs left behind by dead enemies to enhance your skills, improving your combo abilities no end and allowing you to rack up some insane chains, which is ultimately where the biggest challenge of the game lies. Getting to the end of a stage might be easy enough, but chaining enemies along the way until your combo skyrockets into the thousands is something completely different…

Essentially sorting the hardcore men from the casual boys with its deceptively simplistic gameplay, *Bujingai* is a game that yields as much as you put into it. Spend time mastering the fighting system, powering up your various attacks and revisiting stages to improve your combo scores and the game becomes so much more than just a basic hack-and-slash romp – it's a feast of replayable swordplay. All this and sumptuous graphics too? It's almost like we've died and gone to slash-'em-up heaven.

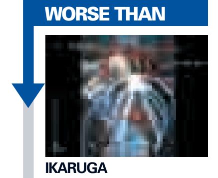
**VERDICT 8/10**
GETS BETTER AS YOU DO – A REAL DELIGHT

OTOGI



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

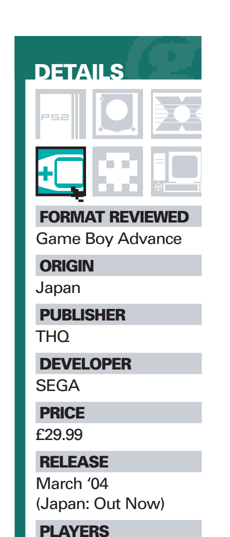


IKARUGA

# SHINING SOUL II

NICE TO SEE THE GBA IS STILL HITTING ITS MONTHLY RPG QUOTA



DETAILS

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Game Boy Advance

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
THQ

**DEVELOPER**
SEGA

**PRICE**
£29.99

**RELEASE**
March '04
(Japan: Out Now)

**PLAYERS**
1-4

**Game Boy-owning RPG fans have never had it so good.** There are enough epic adventures on Nintendo's handheld to keep you going for months, and despite the quantity, the quality of these games has been consistently outstanding. This is great news for RPG aficionados but not such great news for *Shining Soul II*, which comes up short when trying to match the standard set by the likes of *Golden Sun*, *Legend Of Zelda* and *Breath Of Fire*.

Not that *Shining Soul II* is a bad game. Combat takes place in real-time and is easy to learn, leaving you free to dart around enemies while attacking or casting spells. More hectic battles show the item selection to be fiddly, as the action continues while you fumble around for a life-saving potion, but it's a minor flaw in an otherwise solid system. While the plot doesn't fare as well – beginning with passé 'save the princess' fare and struggling to shift into second gear for the duration of the adventure – the battle system sustains interest during these lulls.

There are further touches throughout, such as using Soul Summons in battle and discovering items by eavesdropping. The former comes in handy as *Shining Soul II* can lapse into a stop-start nature, when your character isn't strong enough to progress and troops off into battle only to get killed again. The difficulty curve is more of a squiggle than a smooth line and, as a result, the side quests quickly become compulsory, not optional. Nevertheless, the variation and rewards for hunting down these diversions are satisfying enough to make you glad you deviated from the main game.



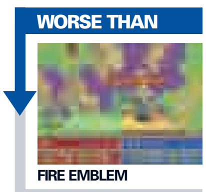

*Shining Soul II* doesn't really pack enough charm to distinguish itself as anything other than a solid yet unspectacular RPG. It even struggles to differentiate itself from the first game, looking and playing almost exactly the same. Adding more classes is beneficial as your choice carries more weight than you first realise – Ninjas can't use axes or spears, for example – otherwise it's the usual sequel checklist with more weapons and better aesthetics, and that's hardly a quantum leap for the series. *Shining Soul II* is nice rather than extraordinary. And while this will do for RPG fans who've exhausted all other options, 'nice' isn't enough to warrant consideration above the superior GBA competition.

SHINING SOUL



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



FIRE EMBLEM

**VERDICT 6/10**
IT'S GOOD BUT DOESN'T SHINE IN A CROWDED GENRE

Side quests, such as this one to revive Boken, reward you with powerful items.










EA TEACHES US TO LOVE THE SMELL OF NAPALM IN THE MORNING

# BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PC

**ORIGIN**
Canada

**PUBLISHER**
EA Games

**DEVELOPER**
Digital Illusions CE

**PRICE**
£29.99

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-64

**PLAYERS**
Pentium III 900Mhz processor, 128Mb RAM, 2Gb hard disk space, 32Mb Direct-X 9 compatible graphics card

**Picture the scene: you're lying chin-deep in the undergrowth, hidden by the tall grass, with the only audible sounds being your own heartbeat and the rattle of distant gunfire coming from somewhere off into the mist.** You hear an engine approaching overhead, followed by the opening bars of Ride Of The Valkyries getting steadily louder. Suddenly a helicopter packed with soldiers bursts through the trees above and slams into the ground in a shower of flame, killing everyone in the vicinity… including you. Damn.

Sounds a bit dramatic, doesn't it? Of course it does – this is an EA game and EA knows its onions when it comes to artistic licence. *Battlefield Vietnam* might fall just short of being enough to send any 'Nam veteran spiralling into flashbacks but this game is certainly atmospheric (although we're talking the Hollywood kind of atmosphere here, as opposed to the horror of the real Vietnam War). Just as *Battlefield 1942*'s gung-ho attitude could have been ripped straight from any number of World War II movies, so *Vietnam* captures the spirit of Tinseltown's take on a spell in 'Nam – right down to the glorious soundtrack (featuring everyone from Edwin Starr to Wagner) that adorns the in-game vehicle radios and the loading screens.

These atmospheric stylings are crucial to drawing you into *Vietnam*, but not all attempts to make this game a unique product have worked. Developer Digital Illusions has had to walk the precarious line of improving on *1942* without losing any of the elements that made it so playable, and has tried to please everyone. But

**FAQs**

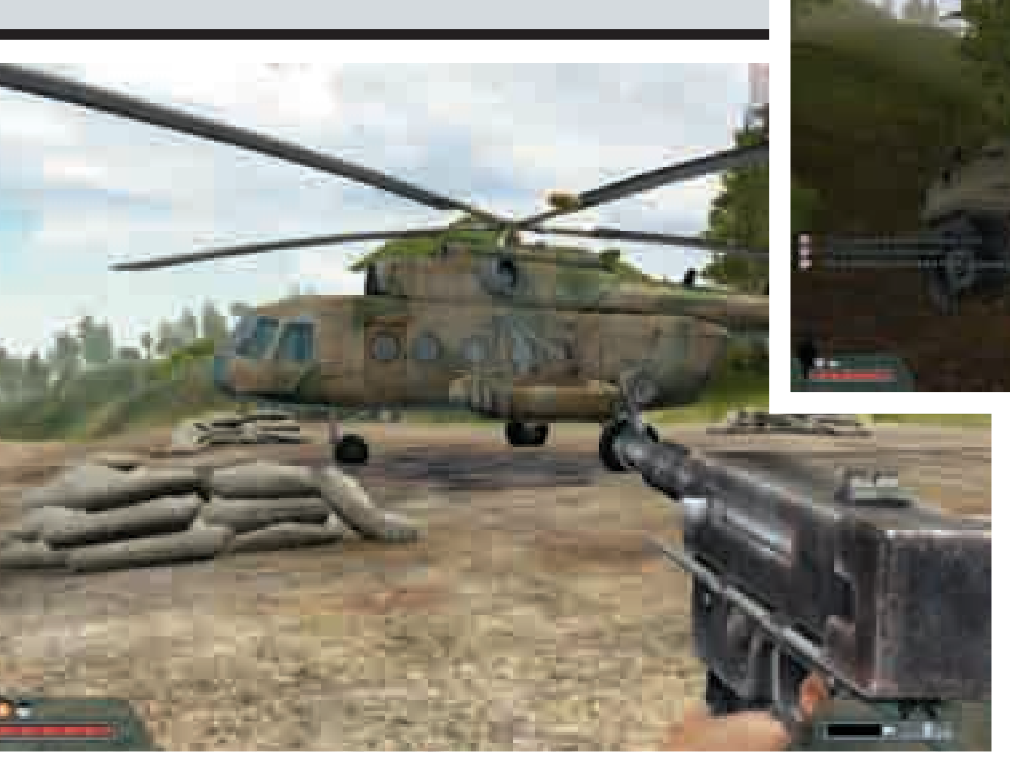
**Q. SO WHAT'S NEW?**
What, besides things like new weapons, a kick-ass soundtrack and various other improvements that, while nice, don't do much to affect the core game mechanics? Er, not much actually.

**Q. AND VEHICLES?**
Helicopters allow for plenty of airlifting shenanigans, while players riding as passengers in vehicles such as jeeps can now use their weapons as they travel.

**Q. WHAT ABOUT OFFLINE?**
Offline the game lacks punch – it's just the online game with bots instead of humans. The additional modes promised were dropped, though will probably turn up in an add-on pack.


The more of you in an assault, the easier it is to take control of a command point.


The scenery is lovely, though you might want to take it easy over narrow bridges like this.



## ONE-MAN ARMY

**The main focus of *Vietnam* is on the multiplayer side of things. Be it via a LAN set-up or through more conventional online play, facing off against real people is the only way to get the best experience. On the single-player front, things are much more limited – with modes like Campaign and the enhanced Challenge dropped in favour of simple Instant Action (an offline version of online play, with bots filling the human void), the game lacks anything worthy for the offline player. It's not even a case of lowering the score by a point – if going online isn't your thing, we'd recommend skipping *Vietnam* altogether.**

even with all the subtle tweaks and enhancements, the similarities between *Vietnam* and its predecessor are blindingly obvious. The premise of each mission, for instance, remains the same – two teams, each starting with a set amount of 'death tickets', must capture command points and hold the opposition at bay until either their ticket count hits zero or you control all the command points. Then there's the spawning system; the ability to relate orders and requests for back-up to your comrades; the opportunity to control various vehicles and change your role between scout, all-round assault soldier or engineer… They're all still the same. In fact, those of you who've spent a long time with *1942* might wonder why you're paying full price for a package that simply looks like an expansion pack full of trees and bushes.



If nose-diving into the ground isn't your style, don't forget you can eject and parachute to safety.

Thankfully, there is an upside to all this. Yes, so the core game mechanics might be nigh-on identical to those of *1942*, but the actual gameplay does get an overhaul – which is perhaps more luck than judgement, seeing as it's all down to the location. The *Battlefield* series isn't known for focusing on enclosed firefights, set as it is across large-scale battlegrounds and, in this sense, *Vietnam* sticks faithfully to what we've seen before. But this is 'Nam we're talking about and *Vietnam* does a great job of replacing *1942*'s barren deserts and war-torn wastelands with verdant jungles, muddy rivers and other suitable backdrops. It doesn't sound like much beyond the kind of thing a bog-standard expansion pack should do, but it makes a huge difference to how you approach each mission. Whereas covering open spaces on foot usually resulted in a tank shell to the head in *1942*, infantry plays a greater part in *Vietnam* thanks to the excess of cover offered by the lush undergrowth. In turn, the gameplay becomes more tactical and stealthy against the previous smash-mouth action presented through an overuse of vehicles.

But is this enough to justify a new purchase? Well, yes, actually it is. The fact that *1942* was such an enjoyable title means the gameplay's already a proven factor, but combine this with all the other new goodness you get for your money (such as plenty of new artillery and vehicles, including the new joys of helicopter flight, which brings in a whole new strategy for airlifting troops and vehicles into the action) and you get a game that really entertains, albeit in a fashion that some of us might well have seen before. Still, if it's enough to convince a new set of gamers to fight the good fight, then that's only a small price to pay.



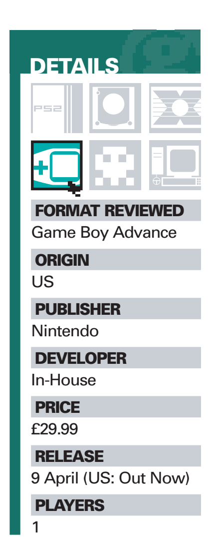

games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

**THE ONLY WAY:** Make no bones about it, pitting up to 64 people against one another is the purest form of excitement there is, but you're unlikely to have the LAN set-up required to get this sort of action going.

**VERDICT 7/10**

VERY ENJOYABLE UNDER THE RIGHT CONDITIONS




**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Game Boy Advance

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
Nintendo

**DEVELOPER**
In-House

**PRICE**
£29.99

**RELEASE**
9 April (US: Out Now)

**PLAYERS**
1

SMALL IS MOST DEFINITELY BEAUTIFUL

# METROID: ZERO MISSION

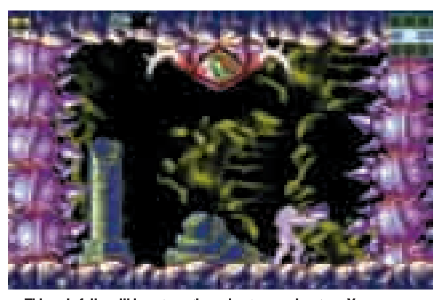
**After battling Space Pirates in *Metroid Prime* and facing off against a deadly alter ego in *Metroid Fusion*, everyone's favourite female bounty hunter has now turned full circle and retells her original adventure.** But those expecting Nintendo to do a lazy re-hash of the 17-year-old NES title will be pleased to hear that *Zero Mission* features more than enough new elements to make it sufficiently different from the original incarnation. Like Capcom's recent *Resident Evil* remake, *Zero Mission* expands significantly on the original *Metroid* and adds plenty of new areas and encounters to what was already an extremely well-put-together game. Think of this more as a 're-imagining'…

Landing on the planet Zebes, Samus' initial mission seems fairly straightforward: kill all the planet's Metroids and destroy their evil Mother Brain leader. It's the perfect excuse to once again explore Zebes' hidden intricacies, and before long you'll be rediscovering the likes of Brinstar, Kraid and Ridley. However, if that sounds a little too simple (and worryingly close to the linearity of *Metroid Fusion*) *Zero Mission* has just as much depth as the planet Samus is exploring. After *Fusion*, it's refreshing to allow Samus to fully explore her beautifully updated world and simply take your time discovering every power-up and hidden room. Unlike *Fusion*, which required you to obtain new power-ups in order to progress, many



Certain levels are extremely dangerous. Best find that Varia suit…

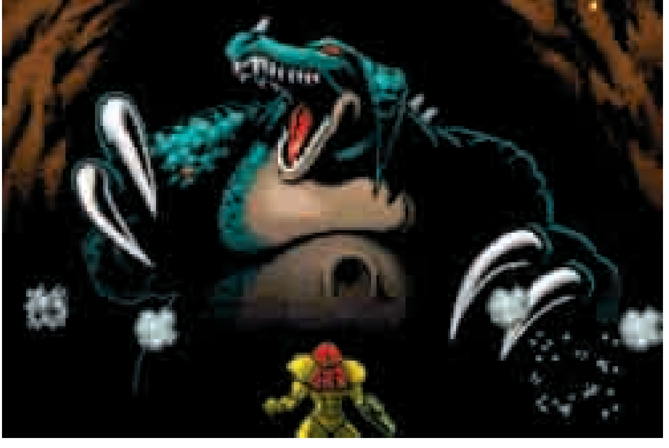




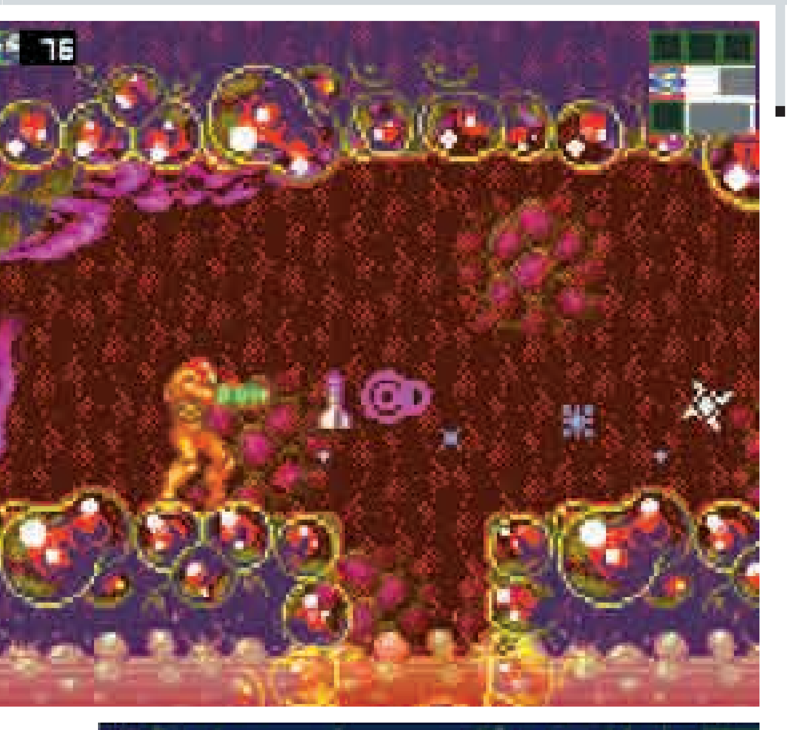
This ugly fella will haunt you throughout your adventure. You can see him off with some well-placed missiles.

## YOU HAVE NO POWER OVER ME

**As much as we enjoy *Zero Mission*, we can't help feel disappointed with the many boss encounters you'll face throughout Samus' adventure. Okay, so *Metroid Fusion* may have gone slightly overboard with the difficulty factor – who can forget the frustration of meeting Nightmare? – but this current change of direction is most unwelcome. It's all very well filling *Zero Mission* with an array of huge, well-animated bosses (particularly the behemoth Kraid) but they're crippled by extremely poor attack patterns and being incredibly easy to dispose of – indeed, many bosses need as few as three shots to return them to their makers. While the final bosses do crank up the difficulty factor, the majority are disappointingly easy to destroy.**

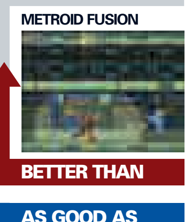


As you progress, *Zero Mission*'s back-story is explained through some gorgeous cut-scenes.





METROID FUSION

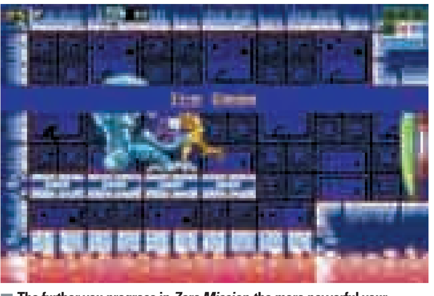


BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



SUPER METROID



The further you progress in *Zero Mission*, the more powerful your weaponry will become.



Later sections of the game are filled with large amounts of enemies – tread carefully.

**gamesTM ENHANCED**

**IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL**

**NEW BUILD:** *Zero Mission's* less linear level structure enables greater freedom and exploration.

**THAT'S NEW:** Defeating Mother Brain reveals a new section of the game and completely new gameplay.

sections of *Zero Mission* can actually be overcome by using your current abilities (and your gaming skill, naturally). Of course, there's still a certain amount of backtracking that must be tolerated, but it's nowhere in the same league as *Fusion* – and thanks to the updated graphics engine, you'll be more than happy to make the odd diversion in order to achieve that 100 per cent acquisition rating.

*Zero Mission*'s style is just as slick as *Fusion*'s and is enhanced by several graphical improvements, many of which have been saved for the impressive (though rather weak) bosses. Most of your enemies are completely different from the NES classic and all are extremely well animated, although special mention must still go the ever-athletic Samus and her constantly evolving suit. Upon landing on Zebes, you'll find yourself extremely vulnerable and with very limited firepower. Within seconds, however, you'll quickly acquire Samus' Morph Ball ability and your Power Suit will rapidly gain many new abilities as you explore. *Fusion*'s Power Grip is just one of the weapons to appear that wasn't in the original, and its inclusion (along with a few others) adds a new dimension to the way veterans will approach this remake. The visuals are perfectly complemented by some excellent audio and there are excellent re-mixed renditions of the NES soundtrack as well as the eerie spot effects of *Metroid Fusion*.

But although *Zero Mission* may be beautifully structured, feature some absorbing, rewarding gameplay, and deliver an atmospheric experience that's almost on par with the amazing *Metroid Prime*, it's not without its problems. You can plough through Zebes in around three to six hours, and the majority of the game is ridiculously easy to negotiate. However, these fairly trivial problems pale next to the ingenious extended play implemented by Nintendo. Without wanting to spoil what can only be described as a marvellous surprise, we'll say that Samus has a whole lot more to do than you may remember; believe us, you'll thank us for keeping our big mouths shut when you see what we mean (however much we want to let the details flow forth). Ultimately, *Zero Mission* is yet another superb addition to the GBA library and will appeal to platform fans and *Metroid* veterans alike.

## FAQs

**Q. ANY EXTRAS?**
Oh yes. Not only can you link up to *Metroid Fusion*, you also get the original *Metroid* upon completing the game.

**Q. ANY EXTRA DIFFICULTY MODES?**
Only the one – available upon completion – but it makes a huge difference to the game and presents a great challenge.

**Q. GOOD STORY?**
There isn't much text, but everything is well explained via some gorgeous cut-scenes.



**VERDICT 8/10**

IT MAY BE SHORT, BUT THIS IS CLASSIC NINTENDO

DETAILS

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PC

**ORIGIN**
Germany

**PUBLISHER**
JoWooD

**DEVELOPER**
JoWooD Vienna

**PRICE**
£14.99

**RELEASE**
Out Now

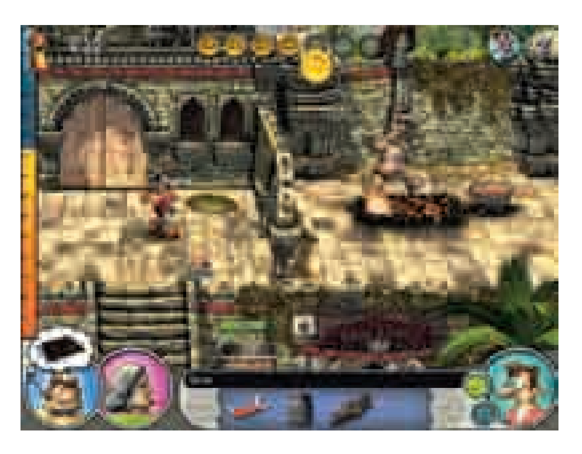
**PLAYERS**
1

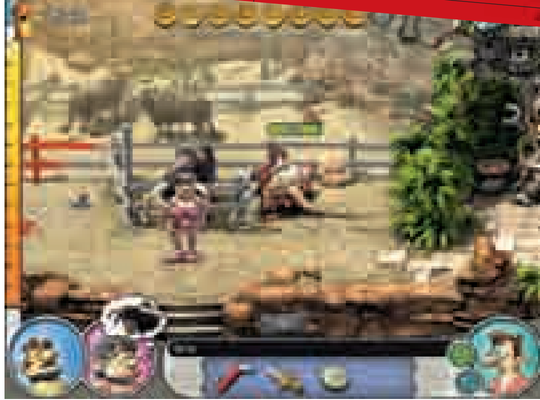
**MINIMUM SPEC**
233MHz processor, 128Mb RAM, 310Mb HDD space, 8Mb DirectX 8-compatible graphics card

YOU'D THINK HE'D HAVE MOVED AWAY BY NOW…

# NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL 2

games™ **ENHANCED**
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
**MUMMY'S BOY:** The addition of new characters makes you think more about your actions.
**LOCATION, LOCATION:** You're no longer in one place, so you have to experiment more.





Putting wet red paint on a bench in front of a bull? Oh, you know that'll hurt in the morning.

**Maybe it's just us being paranoid, but we're pretty sure that we're the only people who actually enjoyed the first *Neighbours From Hell* game.** Slated in most other magazines, it could have just been our twisted sense of humour that let us be entertained by what everyone else ignored – a pity, as it was genuinely brain-teasing and funny, albeit in a somewhat sadistic fashion. Arriving at an even cheaper budget price of £14.99, however, there's hope yet that JoWood's continuation of the series – cleverly named *Neighbours From Hell 2* – will do slightly better.

The premise of the game remains almost identical to the original – as Woody (star of the 'hit' hidden-camera show *Neighbours From Hell*), it's your job to use everyday items found around each level to wreak havoc on your neighbour as he goes about his everyday routine. Whereas the last game was set solely in the neighbour's house, however, the sequel follows him on his holidays and is therefore set in several locations. This helps increase the amount of brain power required to get through the game, as it's no longer easy to predict where items might appear or what can be used, plus it adds plenty of variety as to what sort of dastardly tricks you can play. There are other changes that help liven things up too. Tricky tasks like picking locks, cutting ropes or probing crabs' nests with sticks (yes, really) require a steady hand as well as precise timing, while the neighbour's mother also appears after the first few missions – as you'll have avoid her too, you'll have to think doubly hard before making mischief.

Despite all the additions and improvements over the last outing, though, the question of longevity once again rears its ugly head when playing *NFH2*, mainly because if you're anything like us you'll be able to play through the whole game – earning every coin and bonus along the way – in less than a day. It's more the fault of the puzzle genre in general as opposed to the game itself (in that completing any stage essentially negates the need to go back to it again), but it's still something that might put some people off. And that's a shame; *NFH2* is certainly a mind-bending, guffaw-inspiring game, but considering the budget price equates to over a pound a level, we doubt it will get the attention it deserves.

The closer you can keep the item to the middle of the target, the faster you'll perform the action.





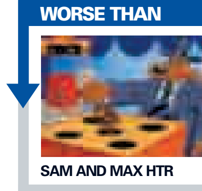
**VERDICT 7/10**
SUBTLY IMPROVED, IF STILL TOO SHORT-LIVED

NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

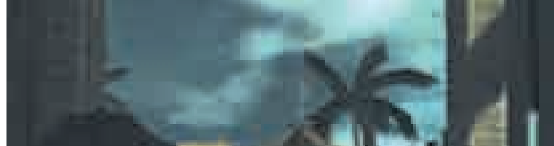


SAM AND MAX HTR


eMag

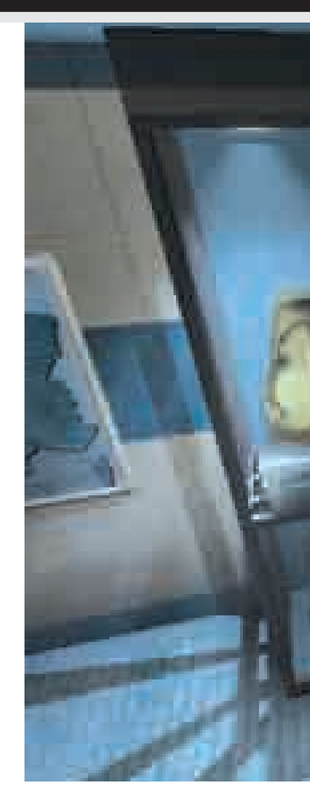
■ Cue inevitable jokes about this chap not being heavy because he's Fisher's brother…





■ The irony of this terrorist on a firing range, and Sam practising shooting, does not escape us.





JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO GO BACK IN THE SHADOWS…

# SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Xbox

**OTHER FORMATS**
PS2, GameCube, PC, GBA

**ORIGIN**
Canada

**PUBLISHER**
Ubisoft

**DEVELOPER**
In-House

**PRICE**
£39.99

**RELEASE**
26 March

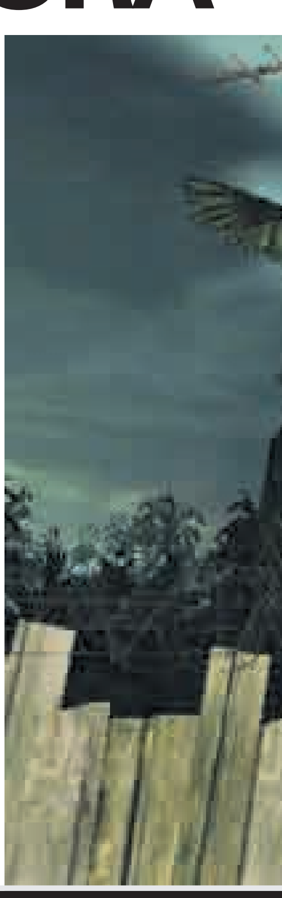
**PLAYERS**
1-4

**These days, every game seems to include a mandatory stealth section – much to its detriment in nine out of ten cases.** Why bother making a game completely suited to performing one purpose do an about-turn for half a level and try to achieve something completely different? Someone who wants a sophisticated, delicious meal doesn't to out one day to see if McDonalds has any specials on – they visit a real restaurant. So to continue the analogy: welcome to The Ivy.

*Splinter Cell* is back with a vengeance after conquering the stealth genre on all formats. Sam Fisher – looking increasingly rugged – has to save the world again, this time from a terrorist known as Sadono, who plans to unleash… Well, it would be unfair to dish out the intricacies of the plot, as the first thing that hits you about the game (aside from the dubious box art) is a beautifully rendered cut-scene which sets the tone for the action ahead. As with most Clancy games the whole experience is driven by narrative, packed to the hilt with twists, surprises and budget-breaking explosions that would make John Woo wet himself. This, however, is merely the tip of the iceberg, as *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* manages to overcome the curious hurdle that many games seem to trip over – namely the necessity for function over form. And considering how attractive the first game was, that's no mean feat.

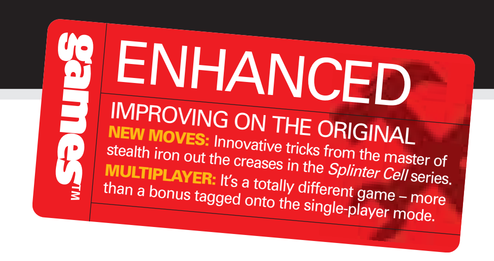
Anyone who played the original Xbox version and has Xbox Live will know that the downloadable levels were a real playground for developers to show off their skills. But this was merely the warm-up for the sequel, and right from the sandbox level that starts this game the player is bombarded with real-time lighting and physics the likes of which have never been committed to console. Gasps may involuntarily escape you the first time Fisher wades through reeds and they gently bob around as he disturbs the water, or when a terrorist hears a noise and shines his torch just above the barrel you may be crouched behind. *Splinter Cell* is undoubtedly the most aesthetically pleasing game on the Xbox, so how could it possibly be more substance than style?

The answer lies with the fact that the graphics complement the game so well: nothing is there just to make it seem like the developer is boasting. However, all this was part of the first title, and a word-for-word repeat performance would be pushing fans' patience. Instead, the development team has spent many late nights brainstorming Sam Fisher, weighing up his moves and the way he can interact with his environment. The character has aged by a few years, and so has been designed to appear more powerful but slightly less agile. He has, however, picked up some new tricks, including the SWAT roll and the half-split jump; they're incredibly






One way to finish this level is to shimmy along the side of a moving high-speed train. No, really.




Another of Fisher's new party tricks is to hang upside down from a beam and pull out his pistol.



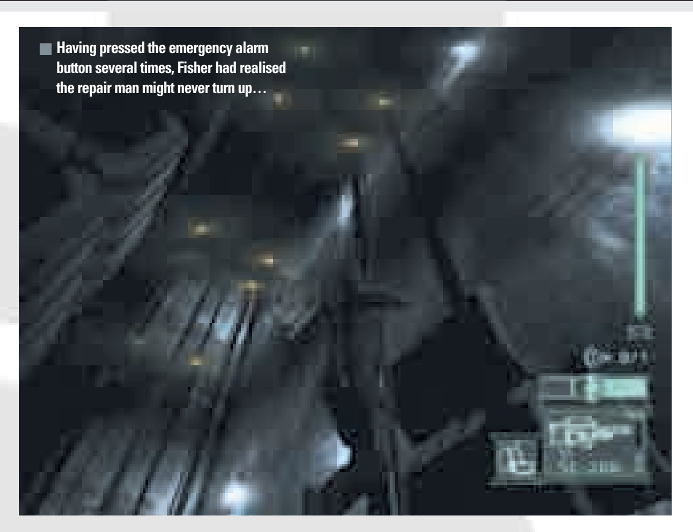
# TOMORROW






## MULTIPLAYER: SHADOW NET SPY

These guys are effectively Sam Fisher-plus – possessing the agility of circus acrobats and gadgets that make Bond seem like a dinosaur, they are the elite of the elite. As spies in the multiplayer mode, you'll need to locate and neutralise various biological samples and either destroy them or extract them for research purposes. To accomplish this, you'll have a host of new moves at your disposal that help you take advantage of the myriad hiding places on the maps. Run up walls to reach higher ledges, jump over railings without stopping and drop flash grenades at the touch of a button. The only drawback is that you're only armed with a sticky shocker weapon, and so must sneak up behind guards and break their necks to remove them for good.


Having pressed the emergency alarm button several times, Fisher had realised the repair man might never turn up…


This is your friend, Doug, being tortured. Time to give the terrorist a taste of his own medicine perhaps?

## FAQs

**Q. ONLY EIGHT LEVELS?**
Yup, but most of them are split into three sections ensuring that it'll take you more than a weekend to finish it.

**Q. ONLY FOUR PLAYERS?**
Any more than four players would result in chaos for the online mode, as stealth would be virtually impossible. Trust us – it works.

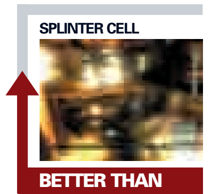
**Q. BETTER THAN BEFORE?**
Much better, but be warned: if you hate patiently waiting in the shadows, avoid this like the plague.

## "SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW IS A COMPLETE PACKAGE AND A SPECTACULAR CONTENDER FOR GAME OF THE YEAR"

effective and they allow players an extra dimension of gameplay that many felt was missing from the first title.

Coming to a grinding halt on the original *Splinter Cell* might have meant hours of repetition until the right move was found, but *Pandora Tomorrow* offers more choice. For example, if you come across a room with a terrorist but you're on the final alert stage, you might be able to find a pipe that leads across the ceiling, allowing you to get around your foe peacefully instead of having to take him out. The new open level design cleverly works with Fisher's new abilities to give the illusion of space and choice in a relatively restrictive environment. 'Not true freedom like *Halo*,' we hear you cry. Well, no – but then again, one criticism that comes back to haunt the Xbox's number-one game is that if you lose yourself in a level such as the Silent Cartographer, giving up on the whole thing seems like a tempting option, whereas *Pandora Tomorrow* cleverly guides the player with a light here or a drainpipe there.

However, there are several banana skins to avoid. One of the most difficult aspects of a stealth game is the enemy AI, as it's difficult to know where to draw the line between realism and gaming. Perhaps in real life a security guard would search around indefinitely if he spotted a rubber-suited man lurking in the shadows, but games can become unplayable when the AI simply forgets you were ever there. *Pandora Tomorrow* has a decent stab at your opposition's

SPLINTER CELL

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

BEING IN THE SAS

## games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**THE ORIGINAL:** Many have imitated *Splinter Cell*, but this new offering proves nobody does it better.

**CELEB STATUS:** How many other games use the voice of *Top Gun's* Michael Ironside for their hero?

## MULTIPLAYER: ARGUS CORP. GUARD

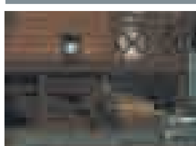
**Between the viral samples and the Shadow Net spies lie the Argus Guards, who are state-of-the-art security. Played in the first-person these guys are armed with lethal weaponry. They are also equipped with a helmet full of gadgets, which allows them to use Motion-Tracking and Electromagnetic Vision to find any intruders. When an enemy spy uses his Night or Thermal Vision he'll be lit up on Electromagnetic; if he triggers a trip wire or camera, the location details appear in the guard's headset. The match-up may seem unfair, but it takes plenty of spy skills to stay hidden from a guard wandering around poking his real-time torch light into the shadows.**


Even if a situation looks impossible, there's usually something in the scenery to help you out.

## 24:00 TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

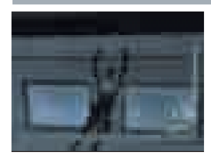
**THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM**

**00:20 MINS**



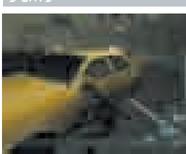
You've just about got to grips with the controls, and the terrorists are starting to disappear. Ubisoft has made sure you've seen almost every lighting trick in the book by now.

**03:00 HOURS**

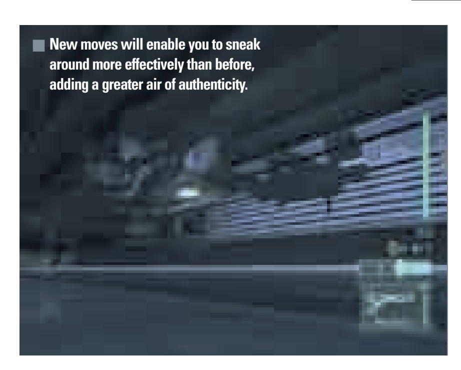


Things are starting to become a little tense. Perhaps *Splinter Cell* veterans will have reached the train level by now, and are sampling the delights of Fisher's new moves.

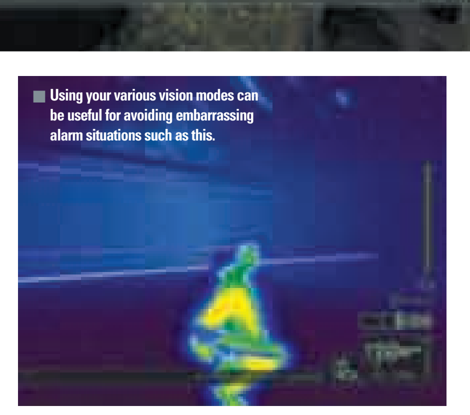
**5 DAYS**



You are Sam Fisher. Your closest relatives haven't seen you for days, and wouldn't know that you ate dinner last night in the split-jump position above the downstairs loo.



New moves will enable you to sneak around more effectively than before, adding a greater air of authenticity.



Using your various vision modes can be useful for avoiding embarrassing alarm situations such as this.

intelligence and, for the most part, comes out smiling, as the terrorists react sensibly to the way you reveal yourself. Once you've given them a bullet in the shoulder they'll fight to the death, but if they hear a whistle or footsteps behind them, they'll eventually shrug it off. This works fine until the frustration of having to complete a particularly tricky section becomes too much for the impatient gamer and they start to blame the enemy AI. Yes, patience is still a virtue, and fans of mindless action titles should still give *Splinter Cell* a wide berth. Unless you're partial to a little online gaming, that is.

Put simply, *Pandora Tomorrow*'s multiplayer takes your breath away and is the most exciting prospect for Xbox Live this year. The play is divided into Argus Guards – who see from the first-person – and Shadow Net operatives who are viewed from the usual 360-degree third-person (see boxouts). This in itself makes the multiplayer content a game on its own, and the developer has treated it as such, giving the lithe, acrobatic Shadow Net operatives moves that Sam Fisher can only dream of. The multiplayer-specific maps really highlight these abilities and provide some heart-stopping moments, as there are so many hiding places.

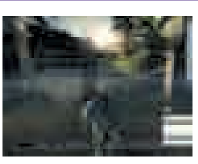
Stealth multiplayer looks set to become the next big thing, and *Pandora Tomorrow* is already looking like it will see off any competition. This is, however, something the game will have to become accustomed to, as there will be hundreds of poor imitations waiting in the wings.

It's doubtful that any wannabes will come close to *Pandora Tomorrow*, which is a spectacular contender for game of the year. True, it may not be to everyone's liking, as stealth games can often infuriate impatient gamers, and this is undiluted sneaking action. Don't expect to be constantly entertained by the scope of the gameplay either, as it's more about honing Fisher's skills so that each player instinctively knows how to approach every new challenge, rather than constantly keeping the game fresh. Indeed, the learning curve blends with the way in which the levels encourage you to use your skills, making the game seem easier than it is. By the time you're creeping around the passenger lounge of LAX, you'll be dreaming about SWAT rolling past doorways, crawling under moving trains and pointing a silenced rifle at people's heads. To that, we can only say one thing: sweet dreams…





**GAMECUBE £39.99 TBA**



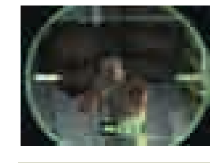
A competent port, *Pandora Tomorrow* should fare very well with its fans on this console. Sadly, the Cube loses the excellent multiplayer action – essentially half the game.

**GBA £29.99 26 MARCH**



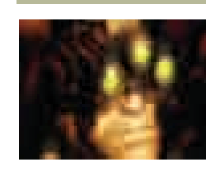
Twenty-two missions, 14 mini-games, even more moves and better gameplay than the previous excellent GBA outing. If stealth is your thing, you really do need this.

**PS2 £39.99 Q2 '04**



The development team has cracked the technique for real-time lighting on the PS2 version, so even though Sony console owners won't see the game until June, the wait may be worth it.

**PC £29.99 Q1 '04**

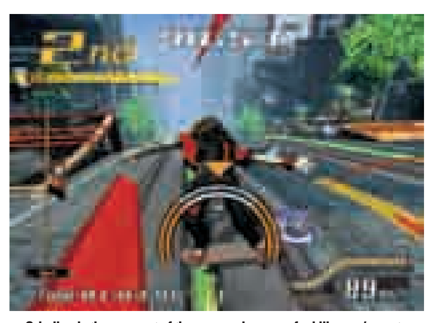


We're not convinced the game copes with keyboard control, so a pad is needed for this one. Considering *Splinter Cell* is a very Xbox-centric title, this could be a mixed bag for PC owners.



**VERDICT 9/10**

**STEALTH ACTION RE-INVENTED AND PERFECTED**



Grinding is the one part of the game where you feel like you've got total control, as you need to balance the board perfectly to succeed.



The basic tricks aren't tough, but combining bigger jumps with board tipping is something that's quite difficult to master.




The more perfect tricks you can perform in succession, the higher your grade and the faster you'll end up moving – pretty obvious, really.

**games™ ENHANCED**

**IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL**

**SLIM SHADED:** The use of cel-shading really gives the game a gritty feeling that works perfectly.

**HEAD TO HEAD:** Find four machines together and you can go up against your friends.

LESS A KING – MORE AN AVERAGE MARQUIS

# OLLIE KING

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT**
Arcade

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
SEGA

**DEVELOPER**
Amusement Vision

**PRICE**
£1 per play

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-4

**Don't you just hate games that sound better than they actually turn out to be?** Obviously, the hype machine is often to blame (and these games usually deserve a good kicking), but sometimes it can simply be a case of fans putting two and two together to make five. Take *Ollie King*, for example. As it's made by the same team behind *Jet Set Radio*, gamers who enjoyed SEGA's graffiti-'em-up are immediately given false hope by association alone. And it is false; so false, in fact, that those of you expecting *Ollie King* to simply be an arcade version of *Jet Set Radio* should pack up and go home right now.

Certainly, the use of cel-shading as a graphical style makes *Ollie King* stand out from the crowd (at least, what crowd there is for arcade skateboarding games) but other than that there's very little comparison between the two titles. Instead, what *Ollie King* offers is far more akin to *Top Skater* (SEGA's original skateboard simulator released nearly seven years ago) while incorporating many of the elements from *Air Trix*, *Top Skater*'s more limited but technically impressive sequel. The premise is simple – choose from a selection of varied skaters then race on one of several courses to see who can get to the finish line first. Picking up the basics isn't hard, and the numerous tougher tricks that require the board to be tipped before jumping and several variations depending on how you jump offer plenty of scope for improvement. Or at least, they would if you couldn't get through each race using a single move.

And that's the problem – flawless presentation aside, the gameplay is strangely lacking the satisfaction you'd expect from a title that requires so much exertion to succeed. This could be because performing tricks to boost your speed – a simple task of just flicking the back of the board on the edge of a jump – is the game's primary focus, leaving the racing side of things feeling somewhat redundant and tacked on. As you rarely have to actually steer the board (shallow walls bounce you in the right direction and bigger corners tend to have jumps on them), only the rail grind sections are left as a real test of your skill and that's not really enough to warrant all that effort. *Ollie King* certainly isn't a terrible game and is sufficient for five minutes of fun, but when one credit only covers a single course – whether you win or lose – and the game ends up being a one-trick pony, it's certainly not as great as we'd hoped.



**VERDICT 5/10**
SMOOTH BUT RATHER UNSATISFYING

TOP SKATER



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



AIR TRIX

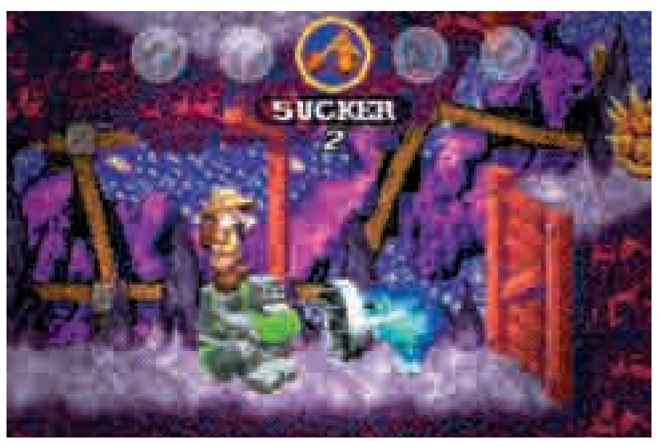

eMag

games™ **FUSED**

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

**DOING:** Side-scrolling platforming at its most basic – dodge enemies, leap gaps, collect treasure.

**THINKING:** Working out how to manage creatures and overcome obstacles is the biggest challenge.





Creatures can be found in various locations and have to be used in order to negotiate obstacles.




Exchange your treasure for gold, which can be spent on special items, armour and more creatures.

HERE'S YOUR ORDER – A BIG PLATE OF DISAPPOINTMENT, MEDIUM RARE

# SABRE WULF

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Game Boy Advance

**ORIGIN**
UK

**PUBLISHER**
THQ

**DEVELOPER**
Rare

**PRICE**
£29.99

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1

**If you're the type who remembers Rare (the Nintendo fanboys' favourite) or Ultimate: Play The Game (which put its name to such classics as *Knightlore* and *Atic Atac*) with teary-eyed fondness, we suggest you stop reading right now.** Not that you're going to be angry at us, you understand, we just don't want you to stamp on those rose-tinted glasses of yours when we tell you that the new *Sabre Wulf* game isn't what you might have wanted.

Far from being the promised exciting action-platformer, *Sabre Wulf* GBA isn't much more than a short-lived, tarted-up memory test à la *Rick Dangerous*. Split into eight hubs with numerous stages in each, the premise is simple: reach the end of each stage, nab whatever treasure the Wulf is guarding and then leg it back to the beginning before he catches you. The catch comes in reaching the Wulf's cave in the first place, as each level is teeming with monsters that'll kill you with a single touch and other troublesome obstacles. To get past them you'll have to use your own 'good' creatures that have their own talents – blowing up walls and enemies, acting as platforms, blocking oncoming attacks and so on.

While this might all sound rather intriguing, however, it really isn't. Each level is incredibly short and can be cleared in hardly any time at all – a necessity, if you want to get the best treasure available. This means that all you have to do is creep through a level to learn the layout, then do it again and again until you can co-ordinate the necessary moves fast enough to snag the gold. Do that and you never have to play the level again. What's more, the race back to the start isn't much more of a challenge as all the monsters and other obstacles vanish, leaving you with a basic sprint to remember which way to go. Sound boring? Well, it is. And that's before we get into the more technical problems – toss in a handful of dodgy collision detection and you've got a game that'll have you throwing your GBA in the bin with frustration before you know it.

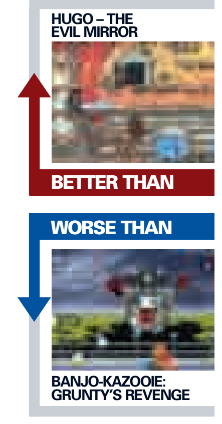
Okay, so it's hard to knock the presentation – with its references to the original and the reasonably pretty graphics – but when the game's this bland and has virtually no replay value, it hardly seems worth bothering. Considering this is the second disappointing Rare release since the buyout, we're starting to wonder what all the fuss was about.



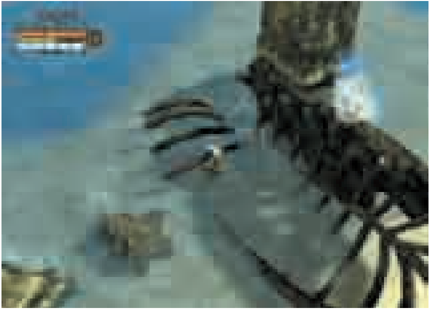

REMIND US WHY WE WAITED FOR THIS AGAIN?

Once you've got the treasure it's a test of memory as you try to remember the terrain and outrun the Wulf back to your tent.



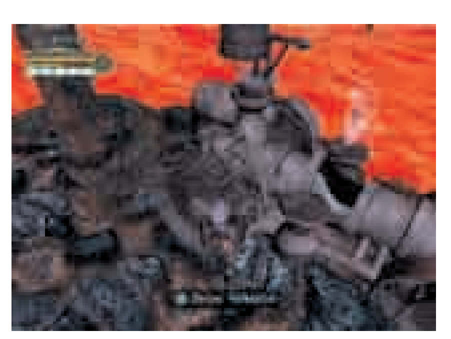



eMag





Stranded on a tropical isle. Let's hope a volleyball has washed up.



Driving? In an RPG? Has the world gone mad? Tsk…



**games™ GLOBAL**

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

**GLOBAL:** *Champions Of Norrath* enables up to four adventurers to tackle the *EverQuest* world at once. Thanks to the ability to communicate through the USB headset you really get a sense of teamwork.

TWO FANTASY WORLDS. ONE GAME ENGINE. WHO'S THE BEST?

# CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH: REALMS OF EVERQUEST



**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
Ubisoft

**DEVELOPER**
Snowblind Studios

**PRICE**
£39.99

**RELEASE**
26 March

**PLAYERS**
1-4

**If you've played either of the *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* titles, then you've as good as played *Champions Of Norrath*.** Simple as that. To the untrained eye, both games could be the same, with near-identical graphics, gameplay and even environments. This comes as no great surprise because Snowblind Studios – developer of the original *Dark Alliance* – has taken responsibility for *Champions Of Norrath*, replacing the Dungeons & Dragons licence with that of *EverQuest*. So how does this title differ from Black Isle's offering?

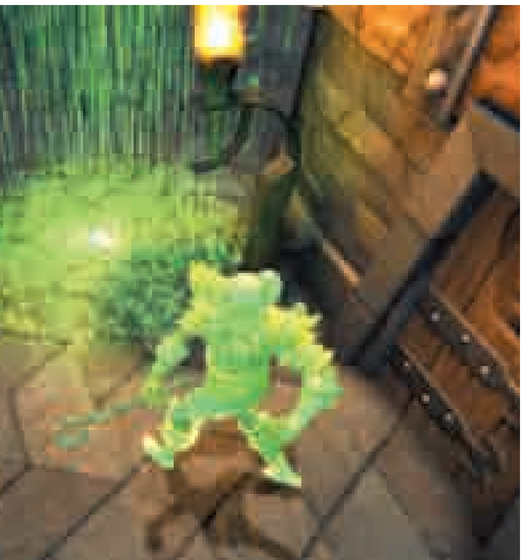
It's only those with a predilection for this series who'll be able to distinguish between each title. If you've had your fill of Goblins, Halberds of Lesser Mana and bare-buttocked Elves, then this would simply be overkill. But the differences are there. For a start, *Champions Of Norrath* supports four players, either via a multi-tap or through the Network Adapter. Unlike the multi-tap, playing through a network allows each player to wander where they please rather than being restricted to the confines of one screen, making it a far less frantic and chaotic event than the offline experience. Okay, so it doesn't promote consistent teamwork in the same way, but the compatibility with the USB headset at least helps you keep track of your fellow roaming adventurers – and recognising them shouldn't be a problem. With five separate races (Barbarian, Wood Elf, High Elf, Erudite and Dark Elf) the choice is relatively big. With the added advantage of being able to customise the look of your adventurer, identical players should be rare. In addition, the reported 10,000 combinations of armour and weapons means you'll never make the faux pas of turning up at a party wearing the same chain mail.

*Champions Of Norrath* may be firmly in the real-time RPG mould, but it still has subtle links to its *EverQuest* heritage – most importantly in its distinct skill-building system. Taking the form of a branching tree, players can choose which route of talent they head down. If you favour blunt instruments over blade weapons, or magic over combat, channel your experience into the relevant skills that suit your fighting style. As the levels of these skills can be boosted to phenomenal levels, you can create characters that are very powerful in particular fields. Although Barbarian and Mage characters will always be biased towards combat and magic respectively, more ambiguous classes, such as the Shadow Knights, can specialise in whatever areas you see fit.

Which is just as well, because the enemies you meet aren't the faceless fodder that games

Spells can have a far greater area effect when boosted with Experience Points.


Being able to zoom in to the action gives you the chance to admire the level of detail in the game. And watch the limbs fly…



## FAQs

**Q. CAN I CHANGE MY CHARACTER'S APPEARANCE?**
At the start of the game you can alter your character's skin tone, hairstyle, hair colour and facial hair (if they're male). But the huge amount of armour styles means no two characters should look alike.

**Q. ARE THERE DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS?**
There's the odd murky cave, but there is also a marvellous variety of environments – from underground lava fields to tropical islands to gothic mansions. Can't promise that there won't be dragons, though…

**Q. IS THE GAME DIFFERENT FOR EACH CHARACTER?**
Sadly, no. *Champions Of Norrath* would be exactly the same when replayed with a different character.


The sad thing is that we didn't buy a helmet because we liked her hair…

## ALL'S SPELL THAT ENDS WELL

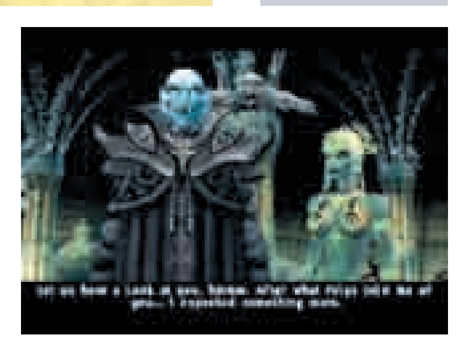
**One of the main advantages of this title over any similar console forebears is the structure of the magic and the ability to customise it. Creating your own magic weapons and armour is nothing new, although the ability to enhance them with the remnants of monsters (like vampire fangs or zombie flesh) is distinctly *EverQuest*. It's the magic spells themselves that are interesting. As well as 'pet' spells (magical familiars that aid you in combat) and 'infectious' spells (positive or negative effects that can affect other enemies or adventurers that are nearby), spells can change their format by increasing their level too. A Disease Bolt, for example, will start off as a basic projectile spell. But as you enhance it, it will become guided, develop a blast radius and ultimately turn into a devastatingly effective incantation obliterating everything on the screen.**






such as this normally throw at you. The occasional monster can come equipped with a devastating magical weapon and the vast number of bosses and sub-bosses will keep you from mindlessly hacking through the hordes with little regard for your own well-being. Obviously, the ability to create your own enchanted weapons and armour (as well as develop extremely powerful spells that take on new effects as you build them up) can turn things in your favour, but the challenging difficulty level keeps you on your toes.

*Champions Of Norrath* boasts over a hundred hours of playing time, so you may be a little worried about the game feeling overly repetitive. This is never likely to be totally unavoidable, but Snowblind has tried hard to introduce some variety to your adventuring. Time-outs include moments where you have to rescue lost kittens in a cave (yes, really), drive a 'Lava Runner' over lakes of fire, and perform errands for the various buxom maidens that cross your path. It's hardly on a par with more traditional RPGs, but it does serve as a nice unique selling point to set it apart from *Dark Alliance II*. That said, if you already own the aforementioned title, it's still difficult to recommend this over *Baldur's Gate* when the two games are fundamentally identical. If your approach to games such as this is only casual, then one does the job just as well as the other, with no massive leaps over the original inspiration (which is *Gauntlet* or the original *Dark Alliance*, depending on your age). But if your appetite for RPGs is insatiable – or if you don't own either title – then four-way multiplayer and online capabilities are excuse enough for a purchase.

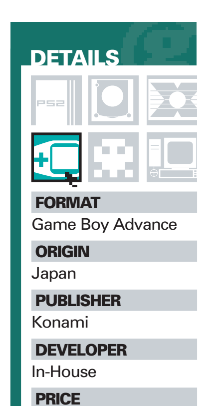




AND TO THINK KONAMI ACTUALLY PEDDLES THIS TO CHILDREN

# YU-GI-OH! WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT 2004

## DETAILS



**FORMAT**
Game Boy Advance

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Konami

**DEVELOPER**
In-House

**PRICE**
£29.99

**RELEASE**
Out Now

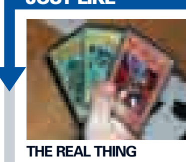
**PLAYERS**
1-2

YU-GI-OH! SACRED CARDS



BETTER THAN

JUST LIKE



THE REAL THING

**Having succumbed to the charms of *Pokémon* many times over and been stung by *Animal Crossing* for an entire year, you'd think we might have learnt by now that games that look like they're designed for kids really aren't good for us.** Unfortunately, that doesn't appear to be the case. Indeed, if our current addiction to the latest *Yu-Gi-Oh!* GBA game is anything to go by, we're clearly just gluttons for punishment.

At first glance, *World Championship Tournament 2004* might not look like anything special; a simulated card-based monster battling game based on a cartoon show that's on too early at the weekend for most of us to catch. However, it's the game's bare-bones approach (card battling, deck editing and very little else) that makes *WCT 2004* so damn intriguing. Under the simplistic exterior lies a game so laden with strategy and tactics that it makes our brains hurt just thinking about it.

Building up a deck isn't tough, but ensuring you've got the right combination of cards and planning ahead to know how to use different cards together – and decimate your opponent in the process – is another thing entirely. What's more, you'll always be refining your deck with new cards, no matter how perfect you might think you've got it. With nearly 1,200 cards to acquire and so many deck combinations and strategies to consider (as well as the lack of a limit to how many times you duel), this really is a game that could theoretically last forever.

Sadly, a handful of flaws stop this game from being perfect – particularly if you're a veteran of the previous game, *Stairway To The Destined Duel*. For instance, the AI is rather haphazard, and, compared to the brisk pace of *Stairway* this feels like wading through treacle. And the lack of a tutorial mode means this certainly isn't a game for beginners or people who don't like to read the manual first. While this might sound terrible, though, these are actually minor gripes that are easily ignored once you're well and truly hooked – something that can happen all too quickly, especially if you can find someone else to play against via link-up. If you're willing to learn and fancy having every minute of your spare time devoured by a simple GBA game, they don't come much more habit-forming than this.

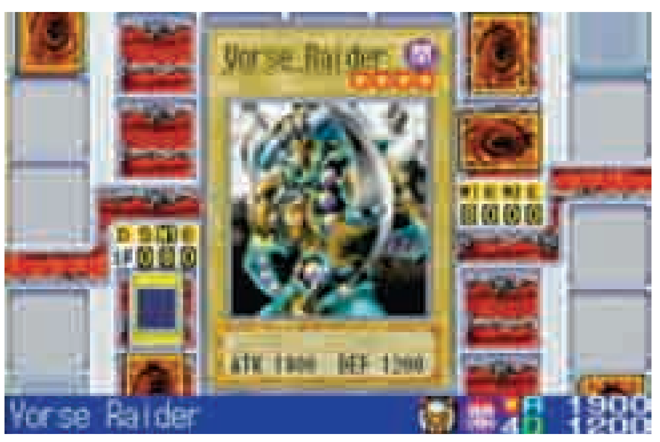


The ability to create three separate decks at once means that you can plan for any strategy without having to rip your deck apart each time.

**games™ ENHANCED**
**IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL**
**STACK THE DECK:** Plenty of new cards allow for more complex strategies and deck making.
**CODE BREAKER:** Removing connectivity with the card game makes getting rarer cards very satisfying.

**VERDICT 7/10**
HORRIBLY ADDICTIVE – APPROACH WITH CAUTION

It pays to have powerful monsters, but even these can be beaten by the right card.






eMag





# ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VIII

## AND THEY CARRIED ON STRATEGISING FOR MANY, MANY PAGES…

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Koei

**DEVELOPER**
In-House

**PRICE**
£39.99

**RELEASE**
26 March
(Japan/US: Out Now)

**PLAYERS**
1-8

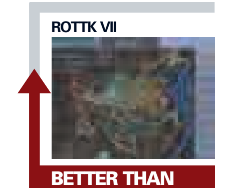
**While Japanese and US fans are already tucking into the ninth instalment of the long-running *Romance Of The Three Kingdoms* series, most European gamers have had to wait until now for their first taste of this unique historical strategy sim.** Thanks to spin-offs such as the *Dynasty Warriors* series, the rich backdrop of 2nd Century China should be familiar to most players, but *ROTTK* couldn't be more different from Koei's fast-paced hack-'n'-slash titles. With its overwhelming complexity, deluge of menus, and simplistic visuals, *ROTTK VIII* is one of the least approachable games you'll find on the PS2. Even the most hardcore of turn-based strategy fans will be in for a daunting ride until the deep historical context of the game world and its baffling array of near-identical character names begin to sink in.

Players start their epic journey to unify or conquer the warring provinces of ancient China at any point in the saga's timeline and can experience events from a variety of perspectives. Becoming a Ruler places the full range of political powers at your fingertips and, while showcasing the game's awesome scope, also serves as a harsh illustration of its intimidating intricacy. The development of prosperity, formation of valuable allegiances, and execution of military action is achieved by expending Action Points during your monthly turns and quarterly councils, with any battles providing a welcome escape from the relentless menu-surfing. Skirmishes also provide minimal visual reward for your efforts, yet once again present a wealth of tactical possibilities.

While the game will undoubtedly demand more patience and effort than the vast majority of gamers can be expected to invest, those able to get a feel for the menu-heavy gameplay will revel in the kind of breathtaking depth and infinite scope you simply won't find in any other console title.


VERDICT 6/10
LIMITED APPEAL BUT LIMITLESS DEPTH

■ You have limited Action Points on each turn with which to enforce your power, so use them wisely.

ROTTK VII

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

DYNASTY TACTICS



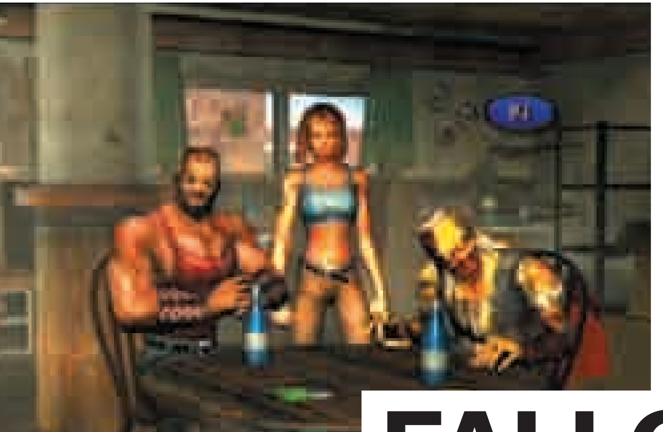
**games™ ENHANCED**
**IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL**
**DIFFERENT CLASS:** Unlike early games in the series, players can take the refreshingly watered-down role of an officer several rungs down the ladder from the all-powerful Ruler.

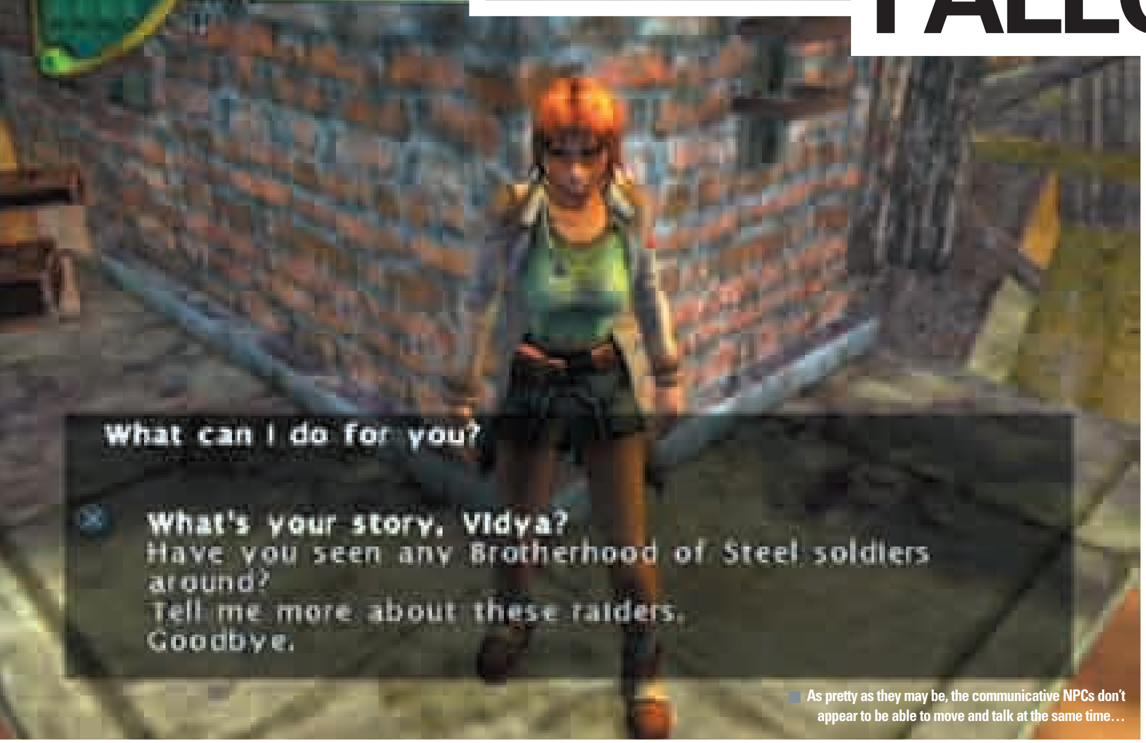

eMag


Cain, the Ghoul, has his own wonderfully unique animations, many of which look painful.


Boss creatures are traditional 'David and Goliath'-type encounters – bringing this one down isn't easy.







As pretty as they may be, the communicative NPCs don't appear to be able to move and talk at the same time…

# FALLOUT:

## DETAILS

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**OTHER FORMATS**
Xbox

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
Avalon

**DEVELOPER**
Interplay

**PRICE**
£39.99

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-2

## FAQs

**Q. HOW LONG?**
This style of game is more or less of uniform length, so 10 to 15 hours should see you through once.

**Q. HOW MANY CHARACTERS?**
Three starters and three souped-up unlockables make for a total cast of six wastelanders to choose from.

**Q. IS IT FALLOUT, THOUGH?**
Not entirely, but there are enough references and similarities to keep most fans from getting too wound up.

# BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

## IT'S THE BOMB THAT WILL BRING US TOGETHER

**games™ FUSED**

**BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER**

**NUKED:** Splicing the post-apocalyptic wastelands, raiders and mutants of the popular *Fallout* world…

**GAUNTLET:** … with pick-up-and-play arcade gameplay like that of the *Dark Alliance* games.

**Pray silence for a moment for one of the finest moments in RPG history.** The minor disappointment of *Tactics* aside, the *Fallout* series is one of the most respected cult franchises in gaming, so the recent loss of Black Isle Studios is that much more of a blow. Already causing quite a fuss among fans of the series in the US, the new direction for *Fallout* has blown the fanbase wide open, and the fact that *Fallout 3* will now most likely never happen is only further riling the adamant critics. So who's right? The vault-dwelling veterans who see this as a blot on the reputation of the series or the more appreciative players who see this on its own merits? The truth is that these aren't really mutually exclusive views at all…

As you begin your voyage into the 'bastardised' *Fallout* universe, you can't help but feel a little hard done by. This outing doesn't fully capture the atmosphere of the original games, nor does it feel as polished as the two *Dark Alliance* titles (or *Champions Of Norrath*). But at the same time it does have a certain charm that makes you want to play out the narrative – even the slightest residue from the *Fallout* world, it would appear, can contribute greatly to a game's appeal. Naturally, the dark humour and intelligent banter that fans of the series have come to know and love has gone the same way as the gameplay, so now while recognisable, both key elements have been watered down to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Expect expletives galore, wanton violence and destruction, and more abrasive metal than any mere mortal could ever be expected to endure – *Fallout*'s in-your-face attitude can grate a little when overused, which is an annoyingly common occurrence.

Being based on the *Dark Alliance* mechanics and engine, *Brotherhood Of Steel*'s visuals are nicely shiny, even if the style isn't quite so admirable. Sonically speaking, there's a real mixed bag going on and while most of the time you only have spot effects and ambience for company, boss encounters and mass slaughters trigger a barrage of licensed metal tunes that reflect the game's new angle perfectly – it's not big, it's not clever, but it certainly works just fine. Weapon effects are similarly all over the shop, and for every shotgun or grenade that is suitably booming there are at least another few energy weapons that sound not unlike run-down children's toys. The top-down viewpoint also takes some getting used to, and although zooming and positioning would be preferable you really see why the overhead camera has been chosen when you're absolutely surrounded by mutated freaks.

It just a shame that *Fallout*'s wonderful character creation and progression process couldn't have found its way into this action-packed update. The three starting characters offer a fair cross section of what we know to be possible but each has limited potential for advancement, meaning that many characters will end up being alike and evolving in similar ways. That's not to say that the system is flawed – a lot of the skills are genuinely useful but there are clearly a few that need to be prioritised. The new lock-on feature (essential, given that half the game's weapons are ranged) works fairly well too, switching to targets near you and allowing for all manner of evasive manoeuvres that keep the game feeling fresh (and should help keep you alive in the early stages).

But what starts off as a watered-down version of *Dark Alliance* with new characters, weapons and naughty words thrown into the mix slowly develops into quite an enjoyable action romp. Die-hard fans of the series will no doubt leap to the offensive with complaints about this being a blemish on the good *Fallout* name, but this simply isn't the case. While it may not be anywhere near the calibre of the PC titles, it does become a perfectly playable action RPG (with the emphasis on 'action') after the first trudging hour or so. The sheer effort required to uncover the enjoyment puts quite a damper on proceedings, especially since it'll most likely negate the chance of a second playthrough. A shame really, since a handful of the things you'll receive after finishing the game once (which takes about ten hours or so) and some frantic moments later on really will make you think about going back to it; not something we recommend unless you've drastically enhanced your Patience stat.




### FOLLOW MY LEAD

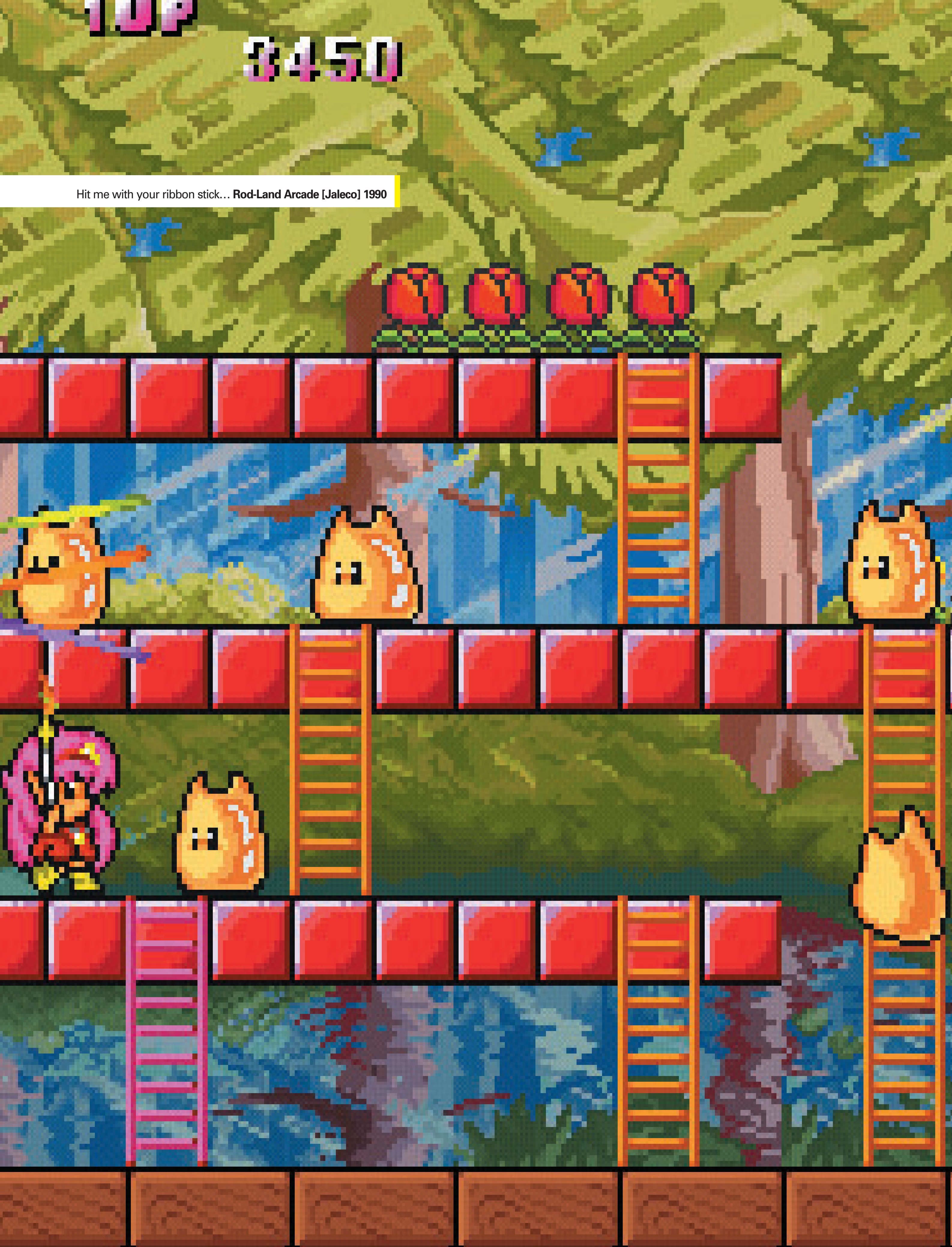
***Brotherhood Of Steel* certainly has a tale or two to tell but it goes about it in a rather deceptive manner. Many essential tasks are cunningly disguised as lucrative side-quests (particularly early on) and only upon completion do they turn out to be vital to your progression through the game. What is quite nice, though, is the way the dialogue changes with each of the characters – most characters are fairly nice to Nadia, the buxom-as-you'd-expect stereotypical female character, but play as Cain (a ghoul who's not quite so attractive) and you'll be the butt of many a jibe from the NPCs. A minor touch but one that does make for some memorable quotes, although most of them are in some way offensive…**

**XBOX** | **£39.99** | **OUT NOW**



A slight hike in visual clarity next to the PlayStation2 version is the only thing Xbox owners will really notice, but that's your lot in terms of noticeable enhancements.





Hit me with your ribbon stick… **Rod-Land Arcade [Jaleco] 1990**


8950
BAM


eMag



A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.17 APRIL 2004
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SPECIAL SUPERHEROES ISSUE

# RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION

## SMASHED! BATMAN

*We review the SNES classic*

## SHOCKING SPANDEX!

*WHERE IS BATMAN IN THE SUPERHERO FAMILY TREE?*

## FEATURED INSIDE

- CAPTAIN COMMANDO
- SUPER PUNCH-OUT
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- JOE & MAC: CAVEMAN NINJA
- ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD
- BARRY MCGUIGAN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING

## DARING DINOSAURS!

Can Yoshi save Mario from certain death?

## *RETROSPECTIVE*

Jim Bagley talks about his life and work

**WIN!** *RETRO CLOTHING*

## ROM SERVICE

*IS EMULATING RETRO GAMES LEGAL? FIND OUT INSIDE!*

## PLUS!

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RETRO ADVERTS

# RETRO NEWS

*Find out what's going on in the here and now of retro gaming…*

**You'll be pleased to know that after 16 issues we're finally going to be covering emulation and all the legal matters that go with it.**

It's interesting to think about how the future of videogames will be affected by new machines that are capable of emulating retro games. The PlayStation3, for instance, may be using emulation to play PlayStation2 and PSone games, and if that does turn out to be true then, theoretically, the machine should be able to emulate pretty much every other older machine as well – including SEGA's Model 2 and Model 3 arcade boards. All it takes is for a clever individual to code one.

Of course, downloading ROMs from the internet would still be breaking copyright laws, but there's no reason at all why developers couldn't officially release emulated versions of their back catalogues at budget prices.

Just imagine if SEGA released a disc with arcade-perfect versions of *Daytona* and *Daytona 2* complete with online play for £9.99. Would you be tempted? We know we would. And that's before we've even begun discussing the likes of *SEGA Rally*, *The Lost World* and *Killer Instinct*. But for now you'll just have to wait or those nice boys in blue might come calling…

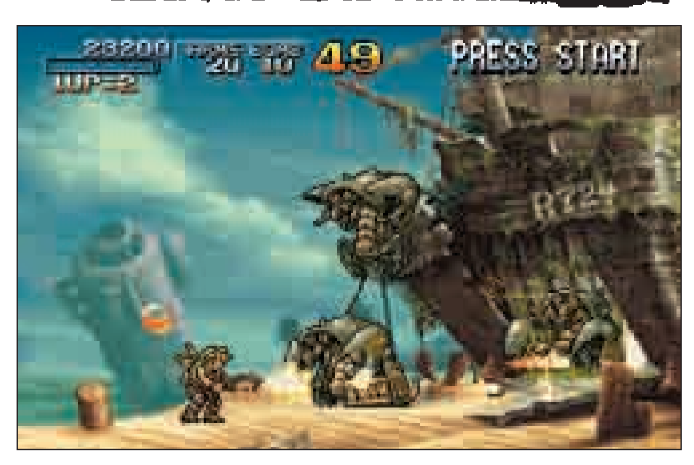
Keith Edwards, Retro Editor

## Sony Snubs SNK

### *Are 2D games too retro for PS2?*

**After months of speculation, it has finally been confirmed that Sony will not be giving SNK the go-ahead to release *Metal Slug 3* in America.** Although the PlayStation2 conversion of this popular Neo-Geo MVS title has already been released in Japan, the American code has failed to comply with Sony's required standard of excellence, although the specific weak points have not been revealed. Seeing as the game had been upgraded with numerous bonus features not found in the arcade version, we can only assume that the decision was made purely on the basis of the game being 2D. Worse still is the news that *Samurai Spirits 5* is also expected to suffer a similar fate.

However, it's not all bad news. SNK has confirmed its support for the Xbox, and *Metal Slug 3* – complete with all its PS2 enhancements – is expected to launch in the US as soon as May. What's more, the company has also revealed that a conversion of *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos* will launch on Microsoft's console later in the year, complete with Live-enabled gameplay. This is great news for retro gamers who can now look forward to seeing SNK's timeless playabilty merging with the wonders of today's technology.




▲ It looks like American gamers won't be getting their hands on *Metal Slug 3*. Poor them.

## More Famicom Festivities

### *Nintendo unveils more goodies for fans*

**Since last month's report on the release of Nintendo's Famicom-styled Game Boy Advance SP in Japan, we've discovered that the company has even more Famicom-themed merchandise on the way to celebrate the machine's 20th anniversary.** Fans as we are of videogame music, we were delighted to discover that an orchestral collection of popular Nintendo music is due for release in Japan very soon. Entitled *Famicom 20th Anniversary Arrange*, the CD is likely to be of similar quality to the symphonic *Ocarina Of Time* soundtrack, which featured impressive renditions of the game's music played by an orchestra on real instruments, rather than on keyboards and synthesizers.

## Retro Online

### *games™ Retro embraces the future*

**We thought you'd like to know that our website – www.totalgames.net – now has a section dedicated to retro gaming. All articles that have been printed in the magazine previously will be available online, so you can catch up with any features you've may have missed. You can also leave messages on the forum and discuss all the things you love or hate about retro gaming with other hardcore retro gamers.**




*It was this year that Clive Sinclair paid the ultimate price for the C5 – the loss of his company. But that was nothing compared to the trouble in Chernobyl...*

## GAMING NEWS APRIL '86

### It's 'Syonara, Sir Clive' as Sinclair sells company

**Having been the market leader in the field of home computers, Sir Clive Sinclair was forced to sell his company in April 1986.** The marketing and merchandising rights to Sir Clive's machines were sold to rival manufacturer Amstrad for a reported £5 million.

Despite enjoying a 40 per cent share of the market, Sinclair struggled to turn a profit and was finding it hard to compete with newer, more powerful machines. However, home computing wasn't the only problem for the company.

Sinclair Research – a department responsible for inventing and assessing the plausibility of new products – had been running at a loss of around £1 million a month. Its latest creation – the C5 electronic tricycle – was rumoured to have lost the company millions after it spectacularly failed to catch on. To add insult to injury, there had also been reports of Sinclair products being unreliable, which damaged the company's reputation and its bank account.

In its heyday, Sinclair had been highly respected and successful. In 1980 it had released the first home computer to cost less than £100. In doing so, it kick-started the entire home computer market. What's more, Sir Clive himself had introduced pocket calculators, digital watches and miniature televisions to the UK during the Sixties and Seventies.



▲ Sir Clive Sinclair – very brainy, but not that good at growing hair, by the looks of things.

## UK Charts in April 1986

**Living Doll**
Cliff Richard & The Young Ones

**A Different Corner**
George Michael

**Rock Me Amadeus**
Falco

**Touch Me (I Want Your Body)**
Samantha Fox

**A Kind Of Magic**
Queen

**Wonderful World**
Sam Cooke

**You To Me Are Everything**
Real Thing

**Peter Gunn**
Art Of Noise & Duane Eddy

**Secret Lovers**
Atlantic Starr

**Train Of Thought**
A-Ha

## Top movies in America, 1986

**Top Gun**
$176,781,720

**Crocodile Dundee**
$174,635,000

**Platoon**
$137,963,328

**The Karate Kid Part 2**
$115,103,979

**Aliens**
$81,843,800

**Little Shop Of Horrors**
$38,747,720

**Jumpin' Jack Flash**
$25,587,804

**Howard The Duck**
$16,295,774

**Critters**
$13,167,232

**Labyrinth**
$12,729,917

## In the news today

### *The World's Worst Civil Nuclear Disaster*

**On 28 April 1986, the Soviet Union admitted that there had been an explosion at its Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine.** Monitoring stations in Sweden, Finland and Norway had picked up high levels of radiation two days previously, but the USSR only revealed what had happened when the extent of the incident became clear.

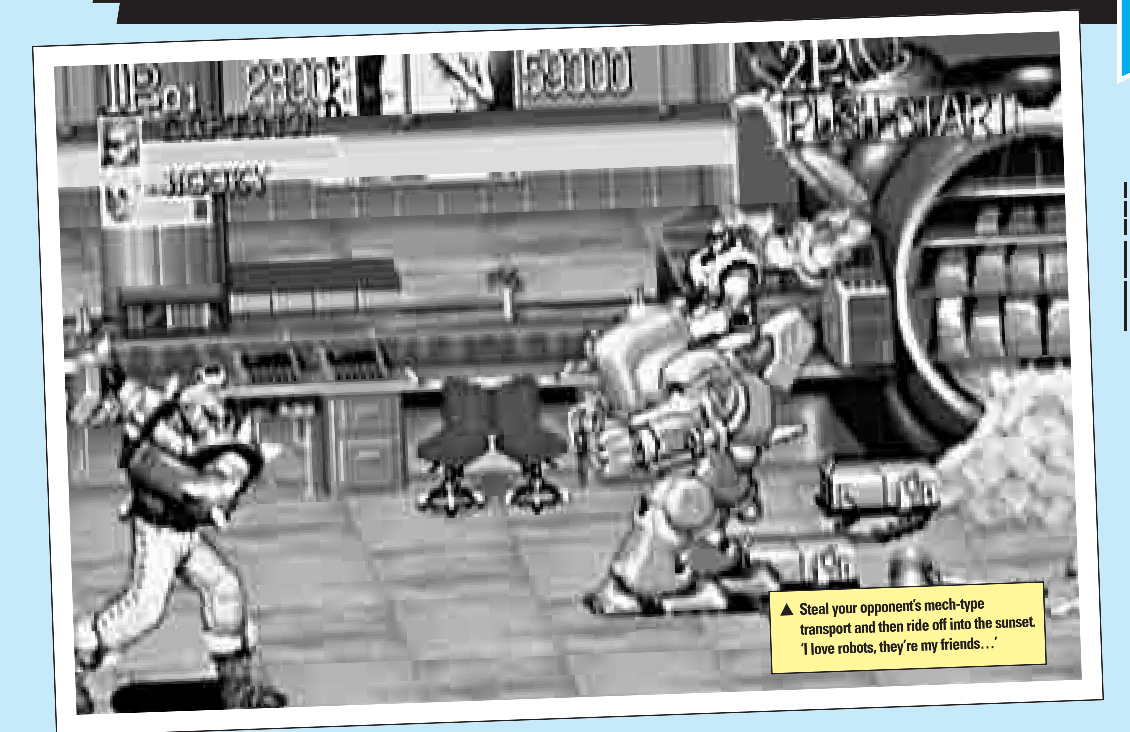
A power surge had caused an explosion that blew the top off one of the four nuclear reactors on the site, releasing a huge cloud of radioactivity across the Ukraine and much of Europe (including the UK). Thirty people died immediately, but it has since been revealed that over ten thousand people have died as a direct result of the incident, while a further 3.5 million have become ill. Cases of thyroid cancer alone in areas around the reactor have increased tenfold.

Despite an 18-mile exclusion zone around the site, the plant continued to produce electricity until 2000, when international pressure caused it to close. The reactor is still there, encased in a concrete shell that's due to be replaced in 2007.

To this day, there are a number farms in Wales that are still subject to restrictions after sheep ate radioactive grass in the aftermath of the explosion.

# C·A·P·T·A·I·N C·O·M·M·A·N·D·O

Great RETRO Gaming Moments

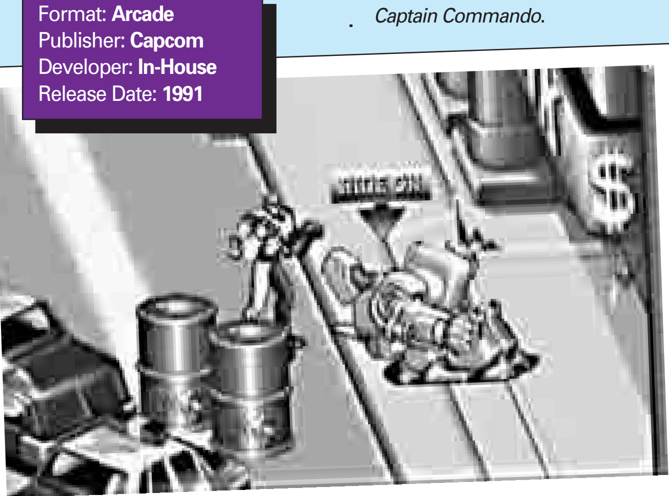


▲ Steal your opponent's mech-type transport and then ride off into the sunset. 'I love robots, they're my friends…'

**At first, *Captain Commando* looks much like any other Capcom beat-'em-up. And that's because it is.** But it doesn't take long to discover that, underneath its unashamedly generic front end, this offers a handful of twists to make it stand out from the crowd – the most obvious being the ability to knock enemies from their giant robotic costumes and then walk off with this mecha-esque mode of transport.

Of course, this 1991 release wasn't the first title to offer such an opportunity – SEGA's 1989 title *Golden Axe* famously allowed you to ride dragons and other mythical beasts whilst on your travels. But it's the sheer size of the robots, and the fact that you've stolen them from the rival you've pummelled into the ground, that made riding them such a great retro gaming moment in *Captain Commando*.

Format: **Arcade**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **In-House**
Release Date: **1991**



Thanks to Captain Commando's brute strength and envious comboing abilities, it isn't overly difficult to get hold of one of these ultra-powerful mech suits. A swift flying kick to the jaw of the rider is usually enough to send them flying out of the cockpit, leaving the machine free for you to pilot. Then all you have to do is get as near to it as possible and jump towards the seat. The machine then automatically lifts you up with its hydraulic legs and you're on your way.

Although slower and heavier, controlling a mech is essentially the same as controlling Captain Commando himself. The main difference is that with all that extra power, enemies don't stand a chance unless they somehow manage to knock you from your seemingly impenetrable perch.

To make your life more difficult, mech suits are usually placed immediately before a boss encounter, meaning that it's virtually impossible to stay on board for more than a few seconds at a time. While you are in control, though, the power behind your punches is immense.

Two-in-one hydraulic punch combos have a devastating effect on an enemy's life gauge, while lifting them up and tossing them through the air is equally as rewarding.

Unfortunately, if you wish to have a go yourself, you'll need to find a copy on the Super Nintendo or PSone, though neither conversion was ever released outside Japan so that could be difficult. Alternatively, you could search for the coin-op original in arcades around the country, though we'd be surprised if any still have a machine up and running.

## HITCH A RIDE

***Captain Commando* isn't the only game to let you pinch your enemies' transport…**

### Goemon

You get to ride all sorts of odd contraptions in the *Goemon* games. Some of our favourites include robotic sumo costumes and clockwork mice.

### Golden Axe

*Golden Axe* lets you ride brightly coloured fantasy creatures with powerful tails capable of whipping enemies' legs out from under them.

### Metal Slug

*Metal Slug* has perhaps the widest range of interactive costumes, creatures and vehicles in any game, ever. Choose from tanks, helicopters and mech suits, as well as camels and elephants.

### Power Stone 2

*Power Stone 2* had over a hundred weapons, and gun towers were present in most levels, though our favourite has to be the moped as it sent rivals flying spectacularly into the air.

# Why Don't They Remake...

*Seconds out as we salute one of the finest boxing titles to grace our consoles*

## SUPER PUNCH-OUT

**Maybe it's just us being cynical, but we're pretty convinced that the majority of boxing games – not just today, but ever – have been pretty rubbish.** Sure, so maybe they look nice and manage to capture the essence of the sport, but when it comes to the gameplay it's all about just hammering the buttons and hoping for a few good hits before you get knocked out. In our opinion, there's only one place to go for a truly enjoyable boxing bash and that's back to the SNES.

You see, while most other games had you slapping buttons like crazy, Nintendo's *Super Punch-Out* was all about 'the mad skillz'. Beating each of the insanely stereotypical boxers took a perfect combination of timing, dodges and special attacks, particularly once you moved up to the bigger championships. The controls might have been devilishly simple, but the amount of punches and tactics you could build up (like comboing body blows into face punches before moving into a rapid-fire uppercut) was pretty impressive.

And that's before you even moved into the world of 'counter-punching' and trying to score a KO in the shortest time possible in order to climb the leaderboard – each opponent had his weak point and if you could work out the precise second to strike the fight would be over before they knew what had hit them.



▲ To say the game is packed with stereotypes is an understatement – there's everything from a kung-fu master and a Rastafarian to a big fat clown.

Yes, *Super Punch-Out* was one fine game. Considering Nintendo's penchant for bringing its successful SNES titles to the GBA, we're surprised that *Super Punch-Out* hasn't been considered for a port – it would work incredibly well thanks to the small number of buttons needed and would be a top game to have with you on the move.

# GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT...

## BARRY MCGUIGAN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING

**Those of you who have tuned into Sky Sports late at night have probably enjoyed boxing pundit Barry McGuigan in action.** Rambling, incoherent and sporting facial hair that appears to have been hastily arranged by a toothbrush, McGuigan is what happens when a boxer takes one too many uppercuts to the head. Still, the Irish pugilist did hold the WBA featherweight belt once, which was enough for Activision to rubber-stamp his name on its 1986 boxing title.



Released for the C64 and ZX Spectrum, *Barry McGuigan's World Championship Boxing* proved to be a surprisingly good game. Before you could embark on your boxing career, characteristics such as fighting style and hair colour had to be decided. Then there was training camp, which gave you three weeks to get your character into shape with sparring, weights and so on. Then once training camp was over you'd finally square off against the likes of Bashin' Bill Snow and Boom Boom Barnett, working your way through the boxing rankings.

Moves available to your boxer included a jab, hook, uppercut and body blow, all with their own advantages. Best of all were the options for defending – pressing up covered your face but leaving the controls on neutral put the boxer in auto-defence mode, warding off body blows. After disposing of the 19 ranked boxers, this left the final match against Barry McGuigan himself. Win this crunch match and you're crowned boxing champion of the world, enjoying fame, glory and a future job as a slightly confused Sky Sports pundit. Brilliant.




# GREAT GAME BOSSES



## T-REX IN JOE & MAC CAVEMAN NINJA



***ALTHOUGH DINOSAURS AND CAVEMEN NEVER COEXISTED IN REAL LIFE, IN VIDEOGAMES THEY'VE MET MANY TIMES THROUGH THE YEARS. HERE IS ONE OF THE MOST MEMORABLE MAN-AND-BEAST ENCOUNTERS...***

**When the SNES first went on sale there were many games that impressed; *F-Zero* with its futuristic Mode 7 landscapes, *Super Soccer* with its pseudo 3D pitch, and, of course, *Super Mario World* with its clean, contemporary visuals and abundant use of sprite scaling.** But there was another game that stood out for its blended pastel colour palette and huge dinosaur bosses. That game was *Joe & Mac Caveman Ninja*.

Based on the coin-op of the same name, *Joe & Mac* certainly looked impressive, though fans of the arcade game were keen to point out that this console conversion featured numerous omissions – though that was hardly Data East's fault.

Even with these cutbacks, though, the terrifying roar of a T-Rex, followed by the earthquake-like tremors caused by its footsteps, was enough to strike fear into the heart of the hardest gamers. Having casually traipsed past the sleeping beast just seconds earlier, it was obvious that an attack was imminent, though the tense music and rumbling snarls still managed to shock.

But surely two little cavemen wouldn't be capable of bringing down a creature of such magnitude would they? On the contrary, it wasn't particularly difficult to crush the angry dinosaur simply by clubbing it in the face. And if you'd managed to collect a weapon upgrade on your way through the level it was even easier – even with enemy cavemen leaping (somewhat implausibly) out of T-Rex's mouth towards you.

So what was it that motivated Joe & Mac to go out dinosaur hunting in the first place? Why, it was to save the gorgeous cave babes, of course…



# STAR GAMES!

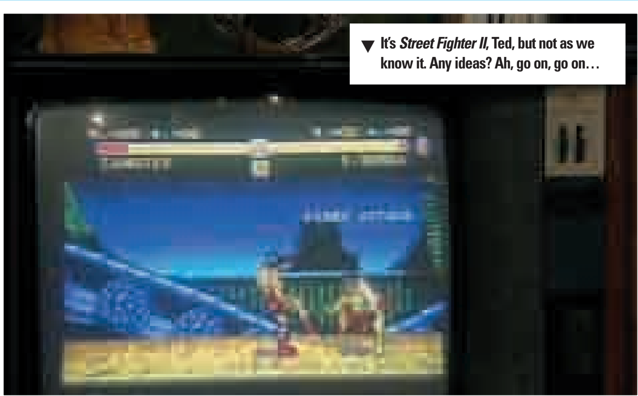
***GOD BE PRAISED, IT'S STREET FIGHTER II IN AN EPISODE OF FATHER TED...***

**Think of *Father Ted* and you'll no doubt recall the central quartet of characters: Fathers Ted, Dougal and Jack, and their housekeeper, Mrs Doyle.** But we'll never forget the day *Street Fighter II* appeared on Craggy Island. The famous game crops up when the delinquent Father Damien 'Damo' Lennon comes to stay on the island. It's not hard to see that Damo is a ne'er-do-well. He's got an earring, he smokes and, God preserve us, he plays videogames.

One afternoon, Ted finds Damo and Dougal hunched in front of the television engaged in a bout of *SFII*. As Zangief and E. Honda slap it out, Damo is the picture of a dedicated gamer (gurning, jamming the joystick around), while Dougal is more an enthusiastic amateur (tongue poking out the corner of his mouth in concentration).

We admit we're baffled about which version of the game should take the credit for this fine performance. It's clearly running on a home computer, but those backgrounds don't look like any version we've ever seen. The game must just be a fine character actor…





▼ It's *Street Fighter II*, Ted, but not as we know it. Any ideas? Ah, go on, go on…




TOKI (Various Home Systems) Ocean, 1991 – UK Advertisement




# SEGA Master System

**SLEEK, POWERFUL AND AFFORDABLE – SEGA'S MASTER SYSTEM SHOULD HAVE BEEN A MARKET LEADER. IF ONLY IT HADN'T HAVE HAD TO COMPETE WITH THE NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM…**

**SEGA hasn't had an easy time of it lately. Come to think of it, SEGA hasn't had an easy time of it full stop.** Even during the 16-bit era when the Mega Drive was selling fairly well the company was struggling to compete against Nintendo's domination of the market. Of course, the real battle had begun in 1986 with the release of the 8-bit Master System – a machine designed to go head-to-head with the NES. And if a console's success was purely down to its technical abilities, SEGA would have been laughing…

Although on paper the Master System's specs didn't look especially impressive compared to those of the NES, closer inspection revealed that the CPU actually ran at double the speed, and, thanks to additional graphics chips, the machine could display more than twice as many colours. Master System games were, on the whole, far more vivid and vibrant than their NES counterparts. The only problem was that there weren't enough of them.

Having launched a year previously, NES sales had been phenomenal – especially in America where gamers had been starved of quality titles since the games industry crash of 1983. The incredibly business-minded Nintendo had signed up a huge number of third-party developers to create games for its machine, and a clause in the standard NES developer contract meant it was against the rules to convert NES games to any other format. Seeing as developers could make more money by reluctantly signing the contract and producing titles exclusively for Nintendo's format, few could afford to compromise their relationship by supporting SEGA.

It wasn't all bad news for SEGA, however. Though it achieved less than ten per cent of the worldwide console market share, in Europe the format was much better received. Not only was Nintendo's European marketing campaign somewhat below par, but the Master System's low price and colourful graphics helped to attract gamers. Retailing at £99.99 (compared to the NES's £140 tag), the initial pack included two controllers and a *Hang On* game card.

The standard Master System design included a cartridge port and a smaller slot that took credit card-sized game cards such as the *Hang On* card included with the basic pack. These were generally more affordable than cartridges, though their limited amount of memory space meant that developers could only use them for small or simple projects. Predictably, as games were generally becoming larger and more graphically demanding, only a handful of titles were released on cards, and the format was soon redundant.

By 1991, with SEGA in the process of introducing its 16-bit Mega Drive and the older machines really starting to show their age, the company released a new look Master System (pictured right) at a reduced price. Smaller and rounder than the standard design, the Master System II came with *Alex Kidd In Miracle Word* built into the hardware and retailed at £59.99. Other changes included the omission of the card slot and reset button, while the video output was fuzzier and less defined.

Despite the many hurdles that the under-supported Master System had to overcome, it introduced many youngsters to the world of videogames. And even though SEGA's console never reached its full potential, the industry tends to look back favourably on the system and its games.

## "WHY I LOVE MY MASTER SYSTEM"

If the Master System were a man I'd have married it by now. Everything about it, from its sleek black and red cover to the chunky game cartridges, is pure perfection. Nothing has ever come close to its retro design, selection of peripherals (3D glasses anyone?) and choice of games. *Fantasy Zone, Alex Kidd In Miracle World, Psycho Fox…* Need I say more?

**LIZ MORRIS**




▼ The original Master System design remains the favourite with fans. Larger and blockier than the Master System II, the hardware featured a cartridge slot and a card slot for budget games.




# PERPLEXING PERIPHERALS

*With hardware like this, it isn't really surprising that SEGA is now a software-only company*

## CONTROL STICK

Featuring an enormous T-grip handle (which was supposed to make movement more precise), the Master System Control Stick was cumbersome and unintuitive. What's more, the buttons and the stick were reversed, making it great for left-handed gamers, but practically unusable for everyone else.

## HANDLE CONTROLLER

Designed with driving and flying games in mind, the Handle Controller wasn't a bad idea in theory, but in practice it was a bit pointless. There were few games that benefited from it, and the poor manufacture quality meant that it was easily broken.

## RAPID-FIRE UNIT

During the 8- and 16-bit days, companies seemed to think that those ghastly rapid-fire control pads were a good idea, but there were barely any games that were enhanced by them. Rather than releasing a rapid-fire pad that could at least be used as a second controller, SEGA opted for a unit that gave gamers the opportunity to use rapid fire with their regular pads.

## 3D GLASSES

Although they were only compatible with eight games, SEGA's 3D glasses were actually quite clever. By opening and closing shutters over the player's eyes, an illusion of depth was created. Unfortunately, they plugged into the card slot, rather than the controller port, so weren't compatible with the Master System II.

## SPORTS PAD

Another of SEGA's bizarre left-handed designs, the Sports Pad featured a tracker ball and two action buttons. Not only was it back to front, but there were so few compatible games out there that it hardly seemed worth it.

## SPECIFICATIONS

CPU: Z-80 (8-bit)
CPU SPEED: 3.6MHz
MEMORY RAM: 64Kbit
VIDEO RAM: 128Kbit
RESOLUTION: 256x226
COLOUR PALETTE: 256
MAX COLOURS: 52
MAX SPRITE SIZE: 8 x 8
MAX SPRITES: 256
AUDIO CAPABILITIES: Three sound generators (four octaves each), one white noise
AUDIO OUTPUT: Mono
STORAGE: 32K game cards (MSI only), 32-512K cartridges

## AROUND THE BACK

Although the Master System II was smoother and curvier than its predecessor, the hardware had been cut down to make it cheaper to produce. There was no longer a card slot for budget releases, and the video output was, surprisingly, fuzzier and less defined.

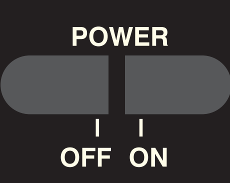
POWER BUTTON

CONTROL PORTS

CARTRIDGE HOLE

# SEGA Master Syste






Classic Machine

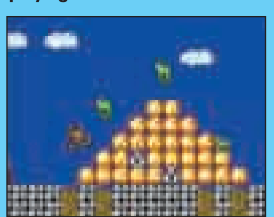
# Six of the Best

***The Master System may have been overshadowed by the NES, but SEGA's stylish machine had plenty of great games to rival the top-selling titles on the all-conquering grey box. These are the best...***

## Alex Kidd In Miracle World

Publisher: SEGA
Year: 1986

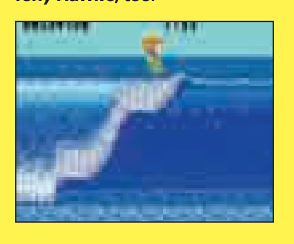
While NES owners enjoyed *Super Mario*, Master System fans made do with second best. *Alex Kidd In Miracle World* offered a similar platforming experience to *Mario*, and had plenty of unique features to elevate it above similar titles. If it wasn't for Nintendo we could be playing *Alex Kidd Sunshine*...



## California Games

Publisher: SEGA
Year: 1987

Consisting of six extreme sports events, up to eight players could compete in turn, taking control of skateboards, bikes and even surfboards in this alternative sports-fest. All set in the glorious Los Angeles sunshine, this was a totally different experience from most Olympic-style games. And to think it was a decade before *Tony Hawk's*, too.



## Hang On & Safari Hunt

Publisher: SEGA
Year: 1989

We don't often feature double packs in Six Of The Best, but we couldn't ignore this one Packaged with the system, *Hang On* was a great translation of SEGA's arcade classic, offering the chance to get behind the handlebars of a super bike. *Safari Hunt* was SEGA's answer to Nintendo's *Duck Hunt* and, thanks to the variation offered by the safari theme, many consider it to be the superior title.



## Psycho Fox

Publisher: SEGA
Year: 1989

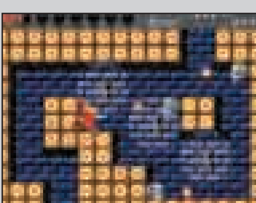
*Psycho Fox* shouldn't have been a good game. With all the *Aero The Acrobats* out there, you'd expect this to be another throwaway platform game. But thanks to its innovative level design and tough yet rewarding gameplay, *Psycho Fox* was actually highly enjoyable. This hilarious adventure saw you out on a mission to defeat Madfox. See page 155 for the review.



## Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap

Publisher: SEGA
Year: 1989

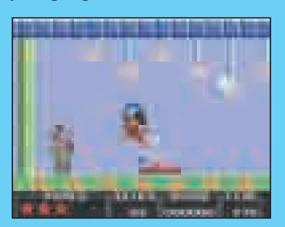
While *Wonder Boy* is a classic series, this is a little different from most instalments thanks to its RPG elements that enabled the hero to transform into six characters, each with their own abilities. Lizard Man, for example, could destroy enemies with his firey breath, while Hawk Man could fly. Sadly, this superb game was ignored by many gamers.



## Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

Publisher: SEGA
Year: 1990

Although *Castle Of Illusion* started out as a Mega Drive title, the Master System conversion was a different game created just for the 8-bit console. The basic gameplay was virtually the same but, surprisingly, the level designs were a little more complex. It was also noticeably harder, which is strange seeing as the Master System was generally seen as being aimed at younger gamers.



## Last Month's NGPC Screenshots

*They weren't all fruit-machine simulators and 2D beat-'em-ups, you know.*

### FIRST ROW

*Dive Alert: Rebecca Version, Biomotor Unitron, Biomotor Unitron 2, Big Bang Pro Wrestling, Pachinko Hissyou GGP, Dynamite Slugger, SNK Vs. Capcom: Card Fighters Clash - Capcom Version, SNK Vs. Capcom: Card Fighters Clash - Special Edition, SNK Vs. Capcom: Card Fighters Clash - SNK Version, Pachisuro Aruze OPWOL*

### SECOND ROW

*Baseball Stars Color, Pachisuro Aruze Oogaku O, Dive Alert: Burn Version, Super Real Mahjong, Samurai Shodown 2, Evolution, Pachisuro Aruze OP-E-Cup, Puzzle Tsunagete Pon, Puyo Pop, Puzzle Tsunagete Pon 2*

### THIRD ROW

*Neo Twenty One, Infinity Cure, Delta Warp, Bikkuriman 2000, Pocket Love If, Last Blade, Magical Drop Pocket, Cool Cool Jam, Pocket Tennis Color, Neo Turf Masters*

### FOURTH ROW

*The King Of Fighters R-2, Sonic The Hedgehog Pocket Adventure, Mezase Kanji Ou, Pachisuro Aruze OP-D2, SNK Vs. Capcom: Match Of The Millenium, Party Mail, Faselei, Pachisuro Azire Ooko P, Metal Slug 1st Mission, Pocket Reversi*

### FIFTH ROW

*Neo Cherry Master Color, Kikouseki Unitron, Dark Arms, Metal Slug 2nd Mission, Shanghai Mini, SNK Gals Fighter, Neo Dragons Wild, Cotton, Neo-Geo Wourld Cup 98 Plus Color, Pachi-slot Aruze Ookoku P*

### SIXTH ROW

*Pac-Man, Densha De GO 2, Neo Baccarat, Picture Puzzle, Rockman Battle & Fighters, Neo Derby Championship, Cool Boarders Pocket, Ganbare Neo Poke Kun, Crush Roller*

### SEVENTH ROW

*Pachisuro Aruze OPHVI-02, Koi Koi Mahjong, Mizuki S Youkai Shashin Kan, Ogre Battle Gaiden, King Of Fighters: Battle De Paradise, Bust-A-Move Mini, Neo Mystery Bonus, Master Of Syoug, Memories Of Pure*




007: THE SPY WHO LOVED ME (Various Home Systems) Domark, 1990 – UK Advert

Classic Feature

# ROM SERVICE

**_Emulation is an unavoidable and controversial part of gaming just as MP3s are to the music industry. So for the first (but certainly not last) time, games™ looks into why so many people are teaching their new dogs old tricks – and if they're even allowed to do it…_**

▼ MAME is among the most popular emulators out there, mainly for its variety.

▼ As tempting as emulation may be, the keyboard interface is enough to put many gamers off, and understandably so.

COME ON – we've all thought about it, even if we haven't actually done it. Much like taping television shows, copying albums and being inebriated in a public house, using emulators is just one of those 'naughty' things that few gamers can claim to have avoided. But the question here isn't so much whether is emulation legal, but if it should be – at least in certain circumstances.

Unfortunately, with piracy on the increase, emulation is now being more stringently policed as new titles as well as retro games get copied and circulated on the internet. For the most part, emulation can be broken down into two main categories – nostalgia and collection. But what many forget as the download bar fills is that in the eyes of the law there's no difference between dredging up an obscure Japanese NES game and filling your hard drive with PSone ISO images. The likelihood of prosecution is as slim as with most other minor offences (authorities are primarily hunting those who profit from the resale of illegally downloaded software) but just because you've never been caught doesn't mean that you won't be.

As new technology evolves it can take some time for legislation to catch up. However, in the case of copying games (new or old) and either distributing or downloading them, the law is clear – it's illegal. Under UK, US and international law, infringing someone's copyright is an offence. The full details are explained in the 'Breaking The Law' boxout on page 146, but, in a nutshell, if you make or distribute ROMs you can be heavily fined – or worse. Just a few weeks ago, Sean Michael Breen – a hacker and leader of the Razor1911 piracy group – was jailed by a Californian court for over four years for copyright infringement and mail fraud. Admittedly, Breen had been hacking new titles and posting them on warez sites before their release,






▲ No displays? Choppy frame rate? Maybe you're better off resurrecting your dusty old cartridge collection after all…

rather than copying retro titles, but the age of the game is immaterial in the eyes of the law. Thanks to copyright legislation, it will be at least another 60 years or so before copyright lapses on even the earliest videogames.

## Golden oldies

It seems odd that a game that may be over 20 years old and no longer in the public eye shouldn't be made available to retro gamers, but, copyright notwithstanding, there are other reasons why emulation is frowned upon. The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) – the US organisation that represents game publishers – explains on its website why older games can't be emulated. "Copyrights and trademarks of games are corporate assets that are sometimes sold from one company to another – the recent sale of the Atari games library to Hasbro Interactive is an example of such a transaction," the website says. "But if these vintage titles are available far and wide, it undermines the value of this intellectual property and adversely affects the copyright owner."

This certainly seems to make sense, although it's unlikely that a few ROMs would significantly damage a company's sales. Midway recently released *Midway Arcade Treasures* for the Xbox and PS2. Containing over 20 classic titles like *Defender* and *Gauntlet*, it's the sort of title you may expect to sell badly as people can get these games for free on their PC. However, that hasn't been the case. "*Arcade Treasures* has been very successful and has not been greatly affected by downloads," says Mike Eglington, senior product manager at Midway. "We believe this is due to the fact that the £14.99 price has attracted a much wider audience for the game, that perhaps is not into using (or does not know how to use) emulation software."

The technical side of emulation can prove tricky for gamers who aren't up to speed with a PC. Not only do you have to know your ROMs from your ISOs, but you need to find the right emulator to run the games you want. And not only is it likely that the games you're after are illegal, the emulator you run them on could well be breaking the law too. While it's not a problem for different machines to do the same job (which is why several firms can make PCs that are ostensibly identical), it's a breach of copyright to use

# EMULATORS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

The fundamentals of the emulation scene

### BIOS

Stands for 'Basic Input/Output System' and is a file (or set of files) needed to use some emulators. Like ROM files, owning them is often illegal unless you own the console itself.

### BLITTER

A dedicated chip used in the display of sprite-based visuals in certain pieces of hardware. Some emulators allow for various display options to be altered.

### DUMPING

The process by which console games or chipsets are uploaded to your PC through specialist equipment.

### EMULATOR

A computer program written to mimic another computer or console, copying its processor and system operations in order to run programs (primarily games, usually old ones).

### FRAME SKIP

A process found in many emulators that removes a set number of animation frames to speed the emulation up to or beyond its proper speed at the expense of visual quality.

### PATCHING

The act of applying a specially created file to a ROM in order to modify it in some way, usually by way of a translation or cheats.

### ROM

A binary reproduction of a videogame cartridge, disc or board that can be run on a PC using specialist programs.

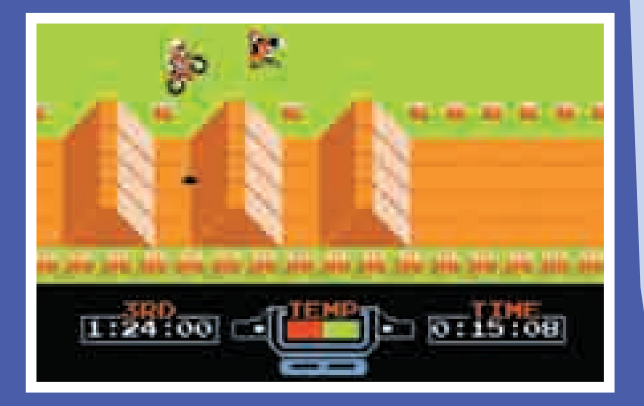
### TRAINER

A small file patched onto the front end of a ROM that allows users to activate various cheats before starting up the game.

# POCKET POWER

**Consoles emulating consoles emulating consoles?**

Emulators are tearing through the handheld market at a rate of knots. Game Park's GP32 is barely known for anything more than portable emulation (including old DOS games) and even the Game Boy Advance – among the most emulated hardware itself – has working 8-bit emulators. There are more adventurous programs on the way for the Nintendo handheld, one of which is a SNES emulator as well as a few more unique projects. One of these sees various true GBA ports being developed on a purely recreational basis. More impressive still is the rate at which mobile gaming is evolving to encompass emulation, and working MAME emulators are already running with some of the more primitive titles. As we're treated to more powerful handsets, the potential for this can only continue to grow.



# BREAKING THE LAW

### MAKING SOME SENSE OF THE COMPLEX LEGALITIES OF EMULATION

**Digital entertainment might be a rapidly evolving field, but there are some long-established laws that govern the emulation of hardware and software. The most obvious legislation concerns copyright. In the US, copyright lies with the company that created the product for 95 years; in the UK copyright belongs to the creator for the duration of their life and for 70 years afterwards. The Berne Convention also protects the copyright of work produced in any of its 70-plus member countries – including Japan – which leaves very little software not covered.**

**Freeware is okay to use, as it is created specifically to be circulated freely. Abandonware, however, is not. Technically, there's no such thing. Generally classed as software that's over a few years old that's not being sold or actively 'supported', abandonware titles are still covered by copyright law. If its creator has officially released it into the public domain then fine, but otherwise it's illegal. Many sites, such as Home Of The Underdogs (www.the-underdogs.org), acknowledge this and will remove titles at the owners' request. Don't forget that in some cases the emulators themselves are also illegal. If they use third-party technology without permission then that's a breach of copyright.**

**Pretty much the only time you can copy software legitimately is to make a back-up disc for your own use, although even this is not always the case. Simon Halberstam, a lawyer specialising in internet and e-commerce law, says it's important to check the documentation that comes with any software. "The licence will dictate what copies can be made," he explains. "Generally speaking the law allows back-ups."**

**The punishment for emulation is usually a fine rather than a jail sentence, but it's probably best to play safe and not bother.**





technology that's been invented specifically for one machine. Simon Halberstam is head of internet and e-commerce law at Sprecher Grier Halberstam LLP and says that regulations surrounding emulators are more complicated than those for the games themselves. "This is very controversial," he explains, "but if they [emulators] do, without licence, borrow or incorporate third-party technology, they will usually infringe." So it's illegal to make and distribute emulated games, and it's illegal to make and distribute emulators. What about using them? Yep, you shouldn't be doing that either. As Simon Halberstam explains, getting your hands on an emulated game is illegal "unless the website or other medium from which they are downloaded expressly or by implication allows copies to be made by way of download."

## Play Safe

But there are ways of enjoying emulation that won't see you thrown behind bars or paying a hefty fine. There are still a number of developers who 'understand' emulation, choosing to make ROM images of their 16-bit games legally freeware. Games like Technopop's Mega Drive shooter *Zero Tolerance* (and even its unreleased sequel) are freely available with the developer's consent – if only a few more firms would follow this lead with their older titles the whole issue of piracy and emulation would be much easier to police.

At the moment, organisations such as the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA) use sophisticated software to track down emulation sites. "Once an illegal site is identified the ISP is notified and asked to 'take down' the site," explains ELSPA's deputy director general, Michael Rawlinson. "The owner of the site can appeal if they believe they are not infringing someone else's copyright work. Very few of the hundreds of thousands of site owners ever do, so it is clear they know they are in the wrong." This method must be working, as emulation sites are disappearing at a rate of knots, but this system can target legitimate emulation websites.

Steve Brown runs The TZX Vault (http://tzxvault.retrogames.com), the preservation website associated with World of Spectrum (www.worldofspectrum.org). Steve's mission is to provide an archive of Spectrum ZX games and make them available to Speccy fans. Along with World Of Spectrum's Martijn van der Heide, he has been contacting programmers and publishers from the Spectrum era to ask for permission to distribute their games – with mostly positive results. World Of Spectrum is officially supported by Amstrad, and over 98 per cent of people contacted give "blanket approval". "This allows free usage of the software on emulators with no strings attached," Brown explains.

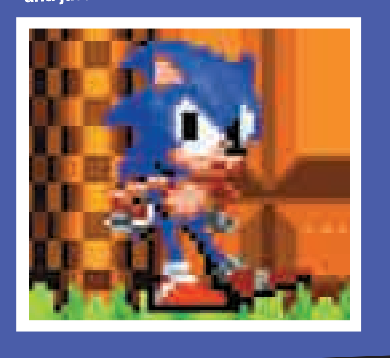
In other cases, the copyright holder agrees that their program can only be hosted by The TZX Vault and World Of Spectrum. The third instance is a little more vague, but the games still have the approval of their creators. "An example of this would be Zeppelin which is now known as Eutechnyx," says Brown. "A few years ago I worked for Eutechnyx. While I was there I negotiated the permit from Brian Jobling, the MD, who stated that Eutechnyx would not pursue any claims against anyone using their software. However, as a lot of their games were re-releases, they couldn't guarantee that the original authors or publishers would not."

Brown's determination to do everything above board extends beyond these sites. "When titles are denied distribution, World Of Spectrum does not provide links to the games or even other sites which offer links to download the games," he says. It also means that both websites can keep running when they are visited by anti-piracy authorities. In 1997, World Of Spectrum was contacted by an angry firm. "We received a 'cease and desist' message from a company whose material was in the archive, which of course we removed right away," explains Martijn van der Heide. "This, in fact, triggered our policy to actively seek permission. In 2001, that same company kindly granted permission for free distribution."

Sadly, in today's 'bonus disc' society many firms are reluctant to

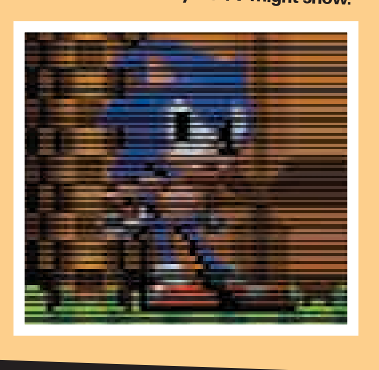
## SONIC ONE

A perfect image of the world's favourite hedgehog. Basic display settings render the blue hero like this – pixelated, vivid and just as SEGA intended.



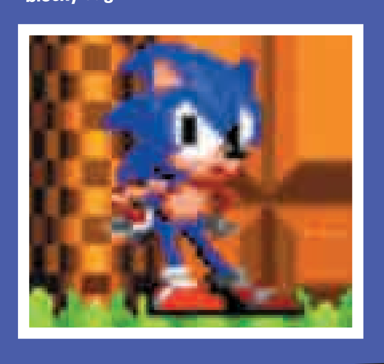
## SONIC TWO

An interlacing filter will leave out every other line of the display, making the image look a little odd on its own, but it's closer to what your TV might show.



## SONIC THREE

Filtering techniques are constantly moving forwards and there are all manner of effects that can smooth blocky edges at the expense of clarity.



throw away games that could be offered as incentives to buy new games (the *Zelda* bonus disc is a great example). So while making the original NES *Ninja Gaiden* games available with the new Xbox title is a nice gesture, perhaps making them freely available (even in time-restricted or shortened forms) would open up the series to a new audience – and that's one of the great things about emulation.

Games that were only ever released in Japan, or were simply hard to get hold of, are now available to UK gamers. People can discover classic series and then buy the full games on eBay or from second-hand stores. Trouble is, once you obtain one game ROM it takes a strong will not to slip onto the downward spiral, or in this case the download spiral. With small file sizes and high-speed connections, you can easily amass a 500-game MAME collection in under an hour.

The benefits of emulation for gamers are tremendous and plentiful, often allowing features and ideas that could never have been implemented in the original games and consoles. One of the biggest of these makes online play between emulators a possibility, and while the Xbox is still waiting for its first decent online fighter, emulation makes it possible to take on anyone in the world at *Street Fighter II*.

Many programs also feature the ability to save at any time and even mess around with the code itself, as well as actually tinkering with the speeds at which games run. It's not all about content either, and as anyone who's used any 32-bit emulation or higher will tell you, a good PC can do wonders for the blurry textures and clarity of the N64 and keep PSone games feeling surprisingly fresh. Sprite-based systems also often offer all manner of blitter filters that smooth the video output, making even the blockiest games absolutely silky.

## Where now?

Over the last few years, there's been a noticeable shift in the direction of the emulation scene. With computer emulators now running everything from the 16-bit era and before all but perfectly (and even a lot of later systems), the attention of programmers is being drawn towards pastures new. The Xbox seems to be leading the march for consoles emulating consoles. Running arcade and Neo Geo titles as recent as *Metal Slug 5* and *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos*, emulators like Final Burn are making Microsoft's machine the serial emulator's console of choice, and compatibility with all available programs is nothing short of remarkable. Hell, there are already PSone emulators available for the Xbox.

Among the most widespread emulators are those that allow the use of GBA software; a worrying trend given that this is closer to out-and-out piracy than any other form of emulation and gives a false impression of what is largely a very honest community. There will always be those who would never consider buying a game that wasn't current but most people we've encountered on our web-trawling adventures will genuinely fork out cash for a game they can play freely if the game is good enough. And most gamers will buy a proper copy of a title simply because there's something to be said for actually having a cartridge, disc, box or manual in your hand. Not only for the fact that it's a legal requirement either – a multitude of other less obvious reasons mean you need to own certain games. Fire up *Super Metroid* or *Tetris* and you'll most likely see what we mean, possibly even finding yourself drawn to your nearest retro shop in a pixel-eyed trance.

Ultimately, we can't condone the use of unofficial emulators to play illegal software. But when the guy next to you on the bus is playing *Pac-man* on his phone, you know something huge is going on and the only thing that could stop it would be something even bigger…



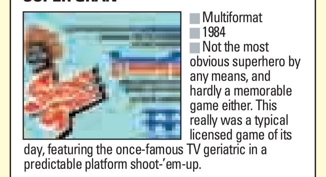

▲ Not every title can be successfully emulated – complicated system procedures can often wreak havoc.




## SPIDER-MAN

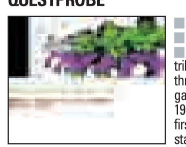
- Atari 2600
- 1982
- Back in 1982 games were still relatively simple, and *Spider-Man* was no different. The main objective was to climb to the top of a skyscraper and defuse a bomb, capturing terrorists on the way. It's still very playable, despite its age.

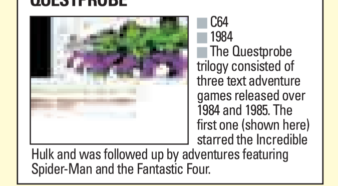
## SUPER GRAN



- Multiformat
- 1984
- Not the most obvious superhero by any means, and hardly a memorable game either. This really was a typical licensed game of its day, featuring the once-famous TV geriatric in a predictable platform shoot-'em-up.

## QUESTPROBE

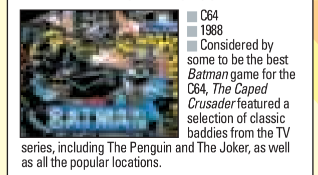




- C64
- 1984
- The Questprobe trilogy consisted of three text adventure games released over 1984 and 1985. The first one (shown here) starred the Incredible Hulk and was followed up by adventures featuring Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four.

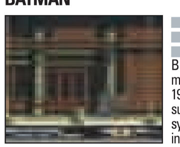
**BATMAN**

## BATMAN: THE CAPED CRUSADER



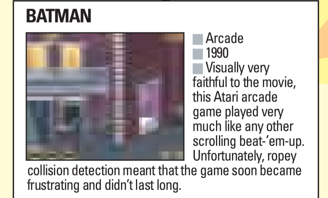
- C64
- 1988
- Considered by some to be the best *Batman* game for the C64, *The Caped Crusader* featured a selection of classic baddies from the TV series, including The Penguin and The Joker, as well as all the popular locations.

## BATMAN



- Multi
- 1989
- What with Tim Burton's *Batman* movie launching in 1989, it wasn't surprising that many systems received tie-in games. The NES, Amiga and Commodore 64 all got versions, though each was slightly different.

## BATMAN



- Arcade
- 1990
- Visually very faithful to the movie, this Atari arcade game played very much like any other scrolling beat-'em-up. Unfortunately, ropey collision detection meant that the game soon became frustrating and didn't last long.

**TURTLES**

## TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

- Arcade
- 1989
- Different from most scrolling beat-'em-ups, this allowed four people to play simultaneously, each taking control of a different Turtle. Although it was perfectly playable, most people remember the follow-up, *Turtles In Time*.

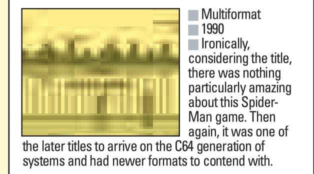
## TMNT: TURTLES IN TIME

- Multiformat
- 1991
- Starting out as a four-player arcade game, this rectified some of the sprite-connection issues that marred the original title released two years previously. A SNES conversion was released but it was only two-player.

## TMNT: THE HYPERSTONE HEIST

- Mega Drive
- 1992
- Although seemingly a new title, this was actually a remix of *Turtles In Time* – some of the levels had actually been lifted straight from the arcade game. Like the SNES version, though, just two people could play simultaneously.

## THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN



- Multiformat
- 1990
- Ironically, considering the title, there was nothing particularly amazing about this Spider-Man game. Then again, it was one of the later titles to arrive on the C64 generation of systems and had newer formats to contend with.

## SPIDER-MAN



- Mega Drive
- 1991
- This was one of those games that never got particularly good reviews, but seemed to be prominent in every videogame shop window. Similar to *Shinobi*, this was a standard jump-and-hit action game.

## SPIDER-MAN: RETURN OF THE SINISTER SIX

- Multiformat
- 1992
- This actually captured the sensation of jumping around as Spider-Man very well, but, unfortunately, the level designs were extremely repetitive and most of the fights took place on the ground, rather than on rooftops.

## SUPERMAN: THE GAME

- C64
- 1985
- The objective of *Superman: The Game* was to fly around a grid-like map of the city streets saving people before Death got to them first. There was also a two-player option in which Death and Superman could compete.

## SUPERMAN

- Arcade
- 1988
- A tedious combination of three variations on a theme, this saw Superman walking and punching, hovering and punching, and flying and punching. Slow and awkward, the sprite connection left a lot to be desired.

## CAPTAIN AMERICA DEFIES THE DOOM TUBE

- Multi
- 1987
- Somewhat predictably set on 4 July, *Captain America Defies The Doom Tube* featured Dr Megalomann attempting to commandeer the White House and take over America. It was up to you to stop him, simple as that.

**TEAM WORK**

## X-MEN: MADNESS IN MURDERWORLD



- C64
- 1989
- A little different from most of the X-Men games that have appeared through the years, this revolved around puzzle solving rather than action. We particularly liked the fact that there was a sign welcoming you to Murderworld.

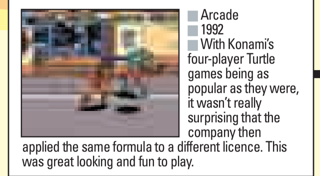
## CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE AVENGERS

- Arcade
- 1991
- Looking a lot like a Capcom game, this Data East scrolling beat-'em-up allowed two players to work together against the forces of evil. Visually impressive, the game included a selection of special moves along with kicks and punches.

## CAPTAIN COMMANDO

- Multi
- 1991
- Looking much the same as any of Capcom's other scrolling beat-'em-ups, this gave players the opportunity to take control of giant robots. The game also included a selection of impressive and devastating combos.

## X-MEN



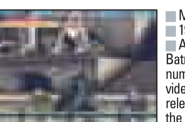
- Arcade
- 1992
- With Konami's four-player Turtle games being as popular as they were, it wasn't really surprising that the company then applied the same formula to a different licence. This was great looking and fun to play.

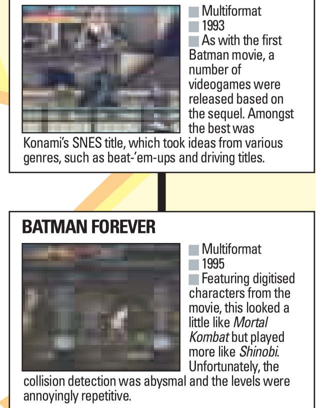
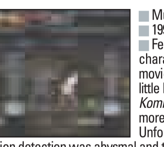
**T**hrough the years there have been hundreds of games starring superheroes. From Mega Man to Spider-Man, Super Mario to Super Gran, there have been far too many to include all of them in a single Family Tree. So we've decided to focus predominantly on the ones that started out life as comic-book characters or on TV shows, rather than those created specifically for videogames. And even then we've had to lose some of the less memorable ones…

### TMNT: TOURNAMENT FIGHTERS
- Multiformat
- 1993
- Although this was released for multiple formats, the SNES version was undoubtedly the best. Taking their inspiration from *Street Fighter*, Konami's designers created a playable and attractive beat-'em-up.

**COMEBACK**

### TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
- Multiformat
- 2003
- Developed by Konami, this was decent enough to play, but fell down in a few key areas. Only two people could play simultaneously (rather than four), and there wasn't nearly enough variation between the levels.

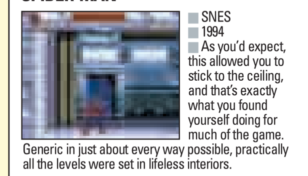
### BATMAN RETURNS

- Multiformat
- 1993
- As with the first Batman movie, a number of videogames were released based on the sequel. Amongst the best was Konami's SNES title, which took ideas from various genres, such as beat-'em-ups and driving titles.

### BATMAN FOREVER


- Multiformat
- 1995
- Featuring digitised characters from the movie, this looked a little like *Mortal Kombat* but played more like *Shinobi*. Unfortunately, the collision detection was abysmal and the levels were annoyingly repetitive.

### BATMAN BEYOND
- Multiformat
- 2000
- Not only did *Batman Beyond* have low-resolution, fuzzy graphics, but it was horribly unresponsive to play and utterly tedious. Worse still (or perhaps mercifully), it was far too easy to get through and could be completed in less than an hour.

### BATMAN VENGEANCE
- Multiformat
- 2001
- Based on the cartoon of the same name, *Batman Vengeance* certainly looked the part with its stylised visuals and cut-scenes. Sadly, the gameplay was totally uninspired and the whole thing was rather short.

### BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW
- Multi
- 2003
- This Japanese-made Batman title was delayed several times before release, yet it still turned out to be disappointing. The controls were unresponsive and the less said about the bizarre camera the better.

### SPIDER-MAN

- SNES
- 1994
- As you'd expect, this allowed you to stick to the ceiling, and that's exactly what you found yourself doing for much of the game. Generic in just about every way possible, practically all the levels were set in lifeless interiors.

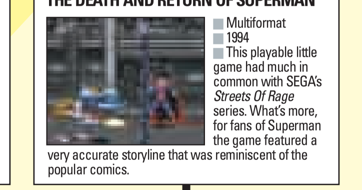
### SPIDER-MAN: WEB OF FIRE

- 32X
- 1996
- With its smooth animation and detailed backdrops, this certainly looked very nice. Unfortunately, in order to make the game so pretty, the developers had been forced to make the game short and thoroughly impossible.

### SPIDER-MAN
- Multiformat
- 2000
- Initially released on the PSone then later on the Dreamcast, *Spider-Man* was received extremely well. Despite being a merely average game, the amount of freedom the player was given appealed to a wide audience.

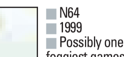
### SPIDER-MAN 2
- PSone
- 2001
- Virtually indistinguishable from its predecessor, this failed to make an impact purely because of the time it was released. With so much hype surrounding the next generation of systems, this wasn't really surprising.

### SPIDER-MAN
- Multiformat
- 2002
- Visually this was very impressive, and, for the most part, was accurate to the movie. Unfortunately, after a superb first level, the structure took a dive and most of the areas were enclosed and claustrophobic.

### THE DEATH AND RETURN OF SUPERMAN

- Multiformat
- 1994
- This playable little game had much in common with SEGA's *Streets Of Rage* series. What's more, for fans of Superman the game featured a very accurate storyline that was reminiscent of the popular comics.

### JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE
- Multi
- 1995
- Quite why so many famous superheroes would be kicking each other's teeth in is beyond us, but that was the premise behind *Justice League Task Force*. Pretty average all round, this didn't really cut it in 1995.

**POLYGON PROBLEMS**

### SUPERMAN 64

- N64
- 1999
- Possibly one of the foggiest games of all time – so much so that just completing the training level was almost impossible. The idea was to fly through rings, but by the time they had faded into view it was often impossible to reach them.

### SUPERMAN: MAN OF STEEL
- Xbox
- 2002
- This looked stunning in the pre-release screenshots, but, predictably, the finished game couldn't live up to the hype. Awkward controls and an unsteady frame rate made it impossible to enjoy what was on offer.

### SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS
- Multiformat
- 2003
- After the Xbox-exclusive *Superman: Man Of Steel*, PS2 and GameCube owners got their chance to play as the red-and-blue-lycra-clad superhero. Sadly, this was just as flawed as the Xbox game.

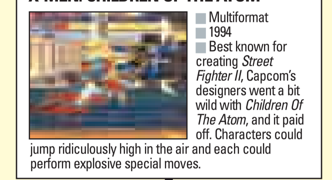
**CLEVER CAPCOM**

### MARVEL SUPERHEROES
- Multiformat
- 1995
- Following on from where *Children Of The Atom* left off, this offered a similarly over-the-top experience as well as the opportunity to play as some of the most memorable Marvel characters to date, including Spider-Man.

### MARVEL SUPERHEROES VS. STREET FIGHTER
- Multiformat
- 1997
- *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* had successfully combined the two franchises in 1996, and this was more of the same but with different characters. Thanks to the 4meg expansion pack the Saturn received a great translation.

### MARVEL VS. CAPCOM: CLASH OF SUPERHEROES
- Multi
- 1998
- Continuing the popular *Vs.* series, *Marvel Vs. Capcom* gave Capcom the opportunity to use its entire back catalogue of characters to face off against Marvel's equally impressive roster. Naturally, this was a big hit with the companies' fans.

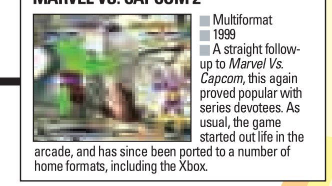
### THE HULK
- Multiformat
- 2003
- You'd think that by 2003 companies would have learned that people expect more from a game than wandering about and hitting things. Unfortunately, that was pretty much it with *The Hulk*. And it looked awful.

### X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM

- Multiformat
- 1994
- Best known for creating *Street Fighter II*, Capcom's designers went a bit wild with *Children Of The Atom*, and it paid off. Characters could jump ridiculously high in the air and each could perform explosive special moves.

### X-MEN: MUTANT APOCALYPSE
- SNES
- 1995
- Once Capcom had created the brilliant *X-Men: Children Of The Atom* for the arcade, it then went to work on this equally impressive SNES title. A mixture of genres, this appealed to X-Men and *Street Fighter* fans alike.

### X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER
- Multiformat
- 1996
- Combining *Street Fighter* with *Children Of The Atom*, Capcom produced a new breed of fighting game in which each player selected two characters and could switch between them at any time during a fight.

**MOVIE HYPE**

### MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2

- Multiformat
- 1999
- A straight follow-up to *Marvel Vs. Capcom*, this again proved popular with series devotees. As usual, the game started out life in the arcade, and has since been ported to a number of home formats, including the Xbox.

### X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION
- Multiformat
- 2002
- Companies seem to think that anyone can develop a decent one-on-one beat-'em-up, but that simply isn't the case. Precision, timing and balance are three important factors, and this lacklustre title had none of them.

### X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE
- Multiformat
- 2003
- This was crammed full of great ideas, but the execution was sadly lacking. Despite being faithful to the movie and boasting features lifted straight from *Splinter Cell*, the levels were uninspired and the visuals drab.

# YOSHI'S ISLAND

**NEVER MIND THAT PLUMBER, YOSHI NEEDS TO BE SALUTED AS THE HERO OF ONE OF THE GREATEST RETRO GAMES EVER**




**Publisher:** Nintendo
**Developer:** Nintendo
**Release:** 1995
**Format:** SNES

## PRETTY IN PINK

**Like so many Japanese game boxes, *Yoshi's Island* featured the name of the game in Japanese and English, though it had somehow been mistranslated to *Yossy Island*. How Nintendo made such a mistake is confusing, especially seeing as Yoshi was already an established character. Dodgy spelling aside, this was one of the prettiest SNES boxes to date, with an art style reminiscent of the in-game graphics.**




**When Nintendo released *Super Mario World* in 1990, the game included a new face – a new face with a big smile and perhaps the longest tongue in the history of videogames.** Of course, this was a time when Nintendo still had the Midas touch, and despite being somewhat stereotypical (if there's such a thing as a typically cutesy dinosaur), Yoshi was an instant hit.

Over the next few years, the little green guy made appearances in numerous Nintendo games, including *Yoshi's Cookie* and *Yoshi's Safari*, not to mention the SNES classic *Mario Kart*. But it wasn't until 1995 (by which time the SNES hardware was starting to look incredibly dated) that Yoshi finally got to star in a game that rivalled *Super Mario World* as the greatest platformer ever created. That game was *Yoshi's Island*.

The title's story was set prior to all the other Mario games, way back when Mario and Luigi were babies being delivered by the stork, in fact. In a suitably dramatic fashion, Mario was dropped by the stork when its journey was intercepted by an evil force, but his fall was broken by one of a group of Yoshis living on the once-tranquil Yoshi's Island. Luckily for Mario, the friendly Yoshis vowed to work together to deliver the helpless infant to his rightful home. And so began an adventure that saw



▲ You had to make sure that Baby Mario stayed on Yoshi's back or you'd lose a life. Very socially responsible…



▲ Some elements of the game were very similar to the *Mario World* titles, but there were plenty of new ideas too.




## SO MUCH FOR THE SEQUEL

N64 owners may recall the release of *Yoshi's Story*, the pseudo follow-up to *Yoshi's Island*. Using a method of grabbing renders in sprite form (similar to the technique used with *Donkey Kong Country* on the SNES) the graphics were certainly very eye-catching if a little out-of-date. Unfortunately, the gameplay simply didn't live up to the quality of its predecessor, much to the dismay of the fans. It wasn't that there was anything particularly wrong with it, but the level structure wasn't as sophisticated and getting to the final boss was considerably easier.

Mario and his Yoshi friends travelling through the most stylised scrolling platform levels ever developed.

Capturing the innocence of a child's drawing, *Yoshi's Island* boasted vivid, colourful environments featuring flowers, butterflies, caves, castles and ocean views. Nothing particularly special about that, you might think. But although the locations certainly weren't anything out of the ordinary for a platformer, it was the unique styling that made *Yoshi's Island* stand out from the crowd.

Much of the scenery was shaded with hatched lines that looked like they'd been roughly scribbled on with a wax crayon, while other areas used blotchy patterns, blended together as if they'd been dabbed on with a paintbrush. Then there were sections that were almost indistinguishable from the *Mario World* games, though most of these were enhanced by simple but effective scaling techniques such as 3D drawbridges that fell towards the screen or enemies with smooth 360-degree movement that used the SNES's sprite-rotation abilities.

Nintendo's artists had clearly crafted a masterpiece as far as *Yoshi's Island*'s visuals went, though their efforts had been aided by the inclusion of Argonaut's Super FX chip. This clever little piece of technology was used to process enough polygons to make *Star Wing* and *Stunt Race FX* possible, though in this case it was mostly used to expand the hardware's 2D capabilities.

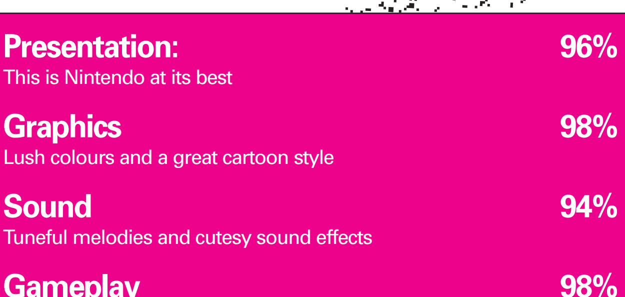
Ordinarily, developers were only able to apply the SNES's Mode 7 scaling techniques to a single element – for example, the machine could rotate or enlarge one character or landscape at a time. But thanks to the Super FX chip, *Yoshi's Island* featured numerous characters rotating on-screen at once. Furthermore, simple polygonal elements scaled in and out of the screen to add a layer of depth.

With so many sumptuous special effects, it was pretty much guaranteed that *Yoshi's Island* would capture the industry's attention, but while the focus was very much on the visuals, the game included more than enough classic Nintendo gameplay and innovative ideas to keep the fans happy too. At its core, the structure of the game was much like *Super Mario World* (or any of Nintendo's other platformers, for that matter), but with a nip and tuck here and there, a couple of extra moves and a new way of gauging energy, *Yoshi's Island* felt as fresh as *Pong* had in 1972.

Perhaps the most obvious feature came in the form of Baby Mario, and how his safety was directly related to Yoshi's health – get hit and the little guy would be knocked from the saddle and end up floating around helplessly in a bubble while a timer gradually counted down to zero. If you managed to grab him during the countdown all would return to normal and the timer would slowly build back up to ten seconds (a maximum of 30 seconds could be achieved by collecting Stars). However, if you failed to reach Mario during the time limit he'd be whisked away by a team of nasties and you'd lose a life.

Unfortunately, by the time *Yoshi's Island* was released in 1995 much of the casual gaming community had lost interest in the ageing SNES. In fact, it wasn't uncommon to see the game in bargain bins for under a tenner just months after its UK release, much to the horror of Nintendo's hardcore fans. But those who did pick up a copy at such a reasonable price found themselves enjoying an unforgettable title that will probably remain with them for the rest of their gaming lives.





**Presentation:** 96%
This is Nintendo at its best

**Graphics** 98%
Lush colours and a great cartoon style

**Sound** 94%
Tuneful melodies and cutesy sound effects

**Gameplay** 98%
Classic platform gameplay with the odd novel twist

**Lifespan** 97%
This is huge. And it's got plenty of secrets to find

**OVERALL 97%**



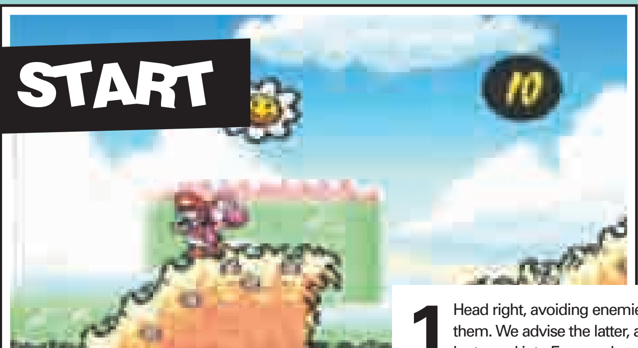




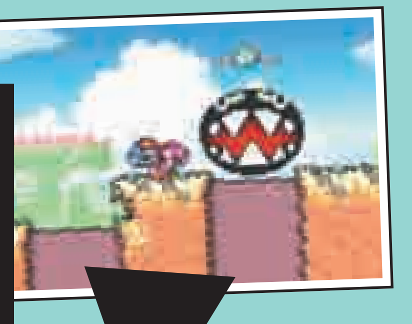



**WE'VE ESTABLISHED THAT YOSHI'S ISLAND IS A GREAT GAME, RIGHT? SO NOW WE'LL GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE 'WATCH OUT BELOW' LEVEL SO YOU CAN SEE THE SORT OF ADDICTIVE GAMEPLAY AND GROOVY GRAPHICS THAT MAKE THIS TITLE SUCH A HIT**

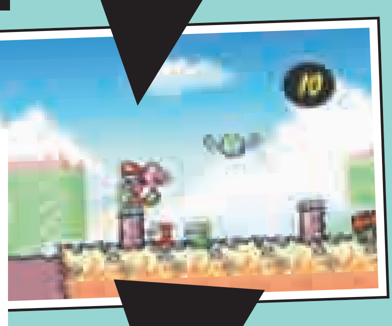
## START



**1** Head right, avoiding enemies or eating them. We advise the latter, as they can be turned into Eggs and used as missiles. Keep going until you come to a bonus-round Daisy (there are five on each level). Collect this, then go right.

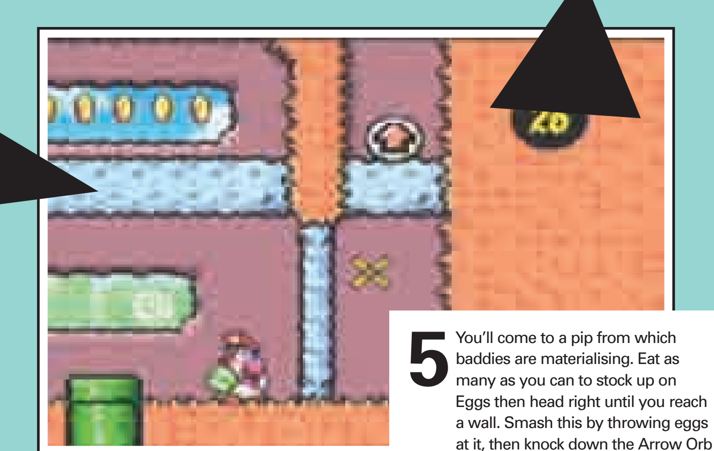


**2** Take the next part of the level fairly slowly. Watch out for black shadows as these show where a Chomp is about to attack. Keep going, avoiding the holes made by the Chomps, until you come to a cloud with wings and a question mark. Hit this with an Egg and it will become the second Daisy on this level. Collect it and head right again.



**3** Carefully proceed until you come to another floating cloud, two wooden posts and two enemies. Jump above the first wooden post and press down on the D-pad, Yoshi will butt-slam it into the floor. Then eat the baddies before hitting the cloud with an Egg. This will release Stars that lengthen the time you have if Mario gets knocked from the saddle.

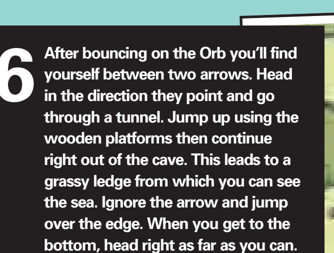
**4** Keep going right and you'll come to two pinball-style flippers. Make sure you've done everything you need to do so far, as once you've gone through them there's no going back. Go through the circle of stars – this is the restart point for the level and will also award you five extra seconds for your Baby Timer. You're now almost halfway through the level.



**5** You'll come to a pip from which baddies are materialising. Eat as many as you can to stock up on Eggs then head right until you reach a wall. Smash this by throwing eggs at it, then knock down the Arrow Orb with an Egg. Now jump on the Orb to bounce to the next area.



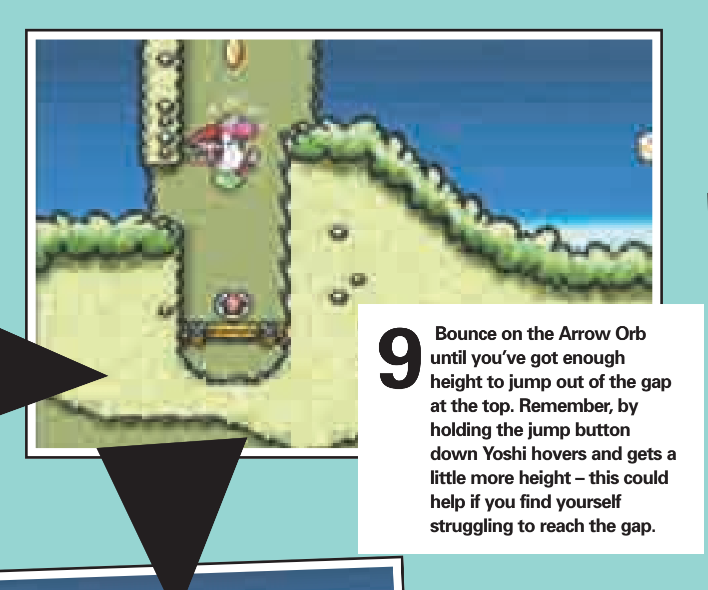
**6** After bouncing on the Orb you'll find yourself between two arrows. Head in the direction they point and go through a tunnel. Jump up using the wooden platforms then continue right out of the cave. This leads to a grassy ledge from which you can see the sea. Ignore the arrow and jump over the edge. When you get to the bottom, head right as far as you can.



**7** You'll get to a cloud that's flickering and only stays on the screen for a few seconds. Hit it with an Egg and you'll get an extra life. Now head back the way you came until you get to a wooden platform and a red block. Hit this with your head and it will create a step to get back up to the ledge with the sea view. Go left and back into the tunnel.



**8** Once in the tunnel keep going left over the top of where you came up at the start of the area, then up the wooden platforms. At the top you'll see another circle of stars. Step through it, then head back right, over the wooden platforms that led you here. Keep going until you're out in the open air, then along until you come to a small tunnel with an Arrow Orb at the bottom.



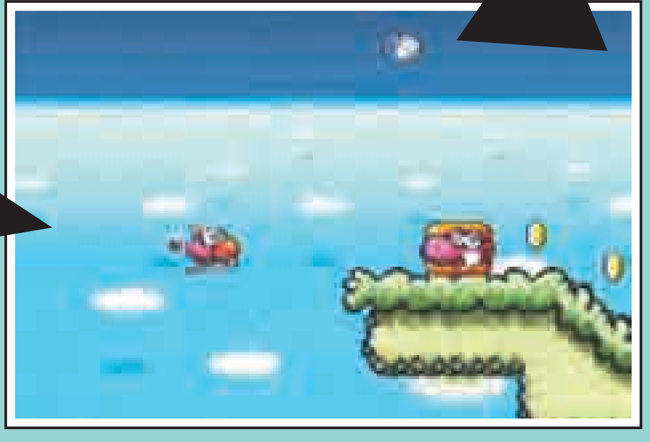
9 Bounce on the Arrow Orb until you've got enough height to jump out of the gap at the top. Remember, by holding the jump button down Yoshi hovers and gets a little more height – this could help if you find yourself struggling to reach the gap.

10 Head right until you reach a bubble with a helicopter inside. Jump into it and you'll become a helicopter for a while. You can fly in any direction by using the D-pad. Quickly go right, but look out for Ghosts.

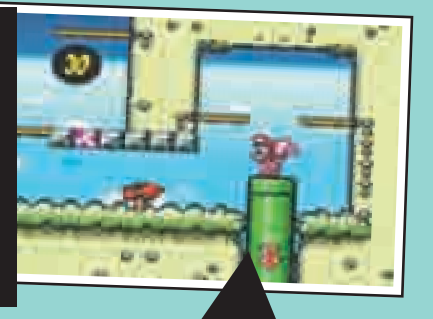
11 Keep going until you get to a piece of scenery at the top of the screen. You can either go through the tunnel in the middle of it or underneath. You can pick up the third Daisy here, just under the right-hand side of the scenery.



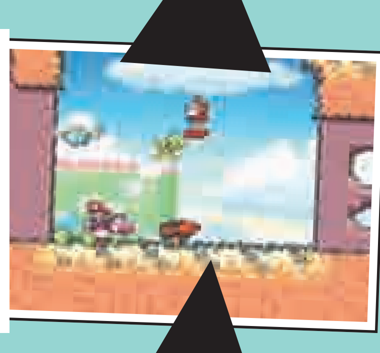
12 Once you've collected the third Daisy, continue right and you'll come to another piece of scenery at the top of the screen. You can't pass through the middle, though you can get another Daisy. Fly down until you're underneath it, then straight up into the centre to where the fourth Daisy is waiting. Pick it up then head out and continue right.



13 Follow the arrows while avoiding the Ghosts, and keep your eye out for a block with a picture of Yoshi on it. Hit it and you'll morph back into dinosaur form. Bear in mind that if you've missed either of the Daisies or you don't get to the block within the time limit, you can transform back into a helicopter and try again whenever you wish.



14 When you've reaped all the benefits of being a helicopter, transform back into Yoshi and go right. Ignore the platforms heading upwards as they only lead to a couple of coins. Instead, head right and go down the green pipe by pressing down on the D-pad.



15 You'll find yourself in an area that looks similar to the beginning of the level. If you're quick you can get an extra life here by shooting the flying baddy with an Egg. You can also collect the fifth Daisy by hitting the flying cloud with an Egg. Once you've got it, head right.

16 And that's it! Jump through the goal and Mario will be propelled onto the back of the next Yoshi. If you've collected all the Daisies you'll have a greater chance of getting to the bonus stage, though there's still a 50 per cent chance that you won't. Watch the marker going around the goal loop – if it lands on a Daisy you've been lucky.

FINISH






***Find a clock, turn it back, then play some old games and review them by today's standards. That's what we've done with three classic titles, but can these games stand up against the current cream of the console crop?***

## ● *Holy Gameplay, Batman…*




**Publisher:** Palcom
**Developer:** Konami
**Release:** 1993
**Price:** £49.99

**Movie tie-ins have a tendency to turn out to be disappointing, but thanks to Konami, *Batman Returns* not only does the movie justice, but makes an excellent videogame too.** In case you've missed it, the film follows the Penguin's dastardly plans to control Gotham City and turn its inhabitants against Batman. Of course, the whole thing ends up backfiring, but that's not before Catwoman has appeared on the scene and the entire city has had to contend with a circus load of fiendish clowns and angry acrobats.

And that's where you come in. Taking control of Batman you patrol the streets of Gotham, neutralising terrorists dressed as circus performers while women and children flee from the danger. All of Tim Burton's weird and wonderful characters are here in some shape or form, and the wonderfully dark architecture of the city contrasts well with the colourful twinkle of Christmas lights and the general vibrancy of the festive season.

But what, aside from the lovely presentation, makes *Batman Returns* stand out from the crowd? Well, there's a range of gameplay styles here, including platform and driving, though for the most part this is a classic Konami scrolling beat-'em-up. What makes it so great is that there's a massive selection of moves on offer – most of which require a certain level of skill from the player. Aside from the usual punch and kick combos you'd expect to find in a game like this, you can also grab enemies and smash them through the scenery. What's more, it's even possible to pick up two baddies at the same time and bang their heads together.

**KEITH** **I have to admit that I'm not a massive Batman fan, but when a game comes along that's as well crafted as this it's hard not to be impressed. It's amazing just how well Konami has captured the spirit of the movie – visually there's very little to touch it on the SNES, and Danny Elfman's score has been faithfully recreated. What's more, there's enough variation between the levels to keep each feeling fresh, even though the pace of the gameplay is a little monotonous from start to finish. And if only it had been two-player…**

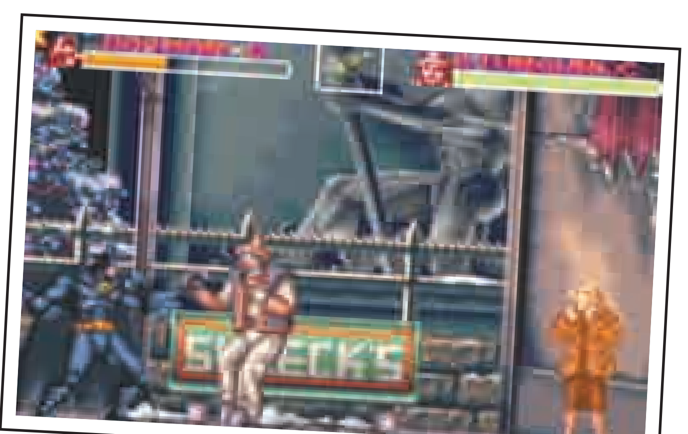
### *In Retrospect*

**Although this wasn't the best scrolling beat-'em-up ever made, it played well enough and certainly looked very lovely. Of course, there are very few comparable games coming out these days, so it's difficult to decide whether it's aged or not.**

### CRITICISM

If there's one problem with *Batman Returns* it's that there's no two-player mode. This affects the replay value simply because there's very little to go back to once you've completed it. It's likely to take you a while to get to the end, though, as continues are in short supply and some of the later levels are extremely taxing. But being able to play co-operatively would have increased the longevity, and the overall appeal, of the game.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Presentation:** | **95%** |
| **Graphics:** | **92%** |
| **Sound:** | **93%** |
| **Gameplay** | **86%** |
| **Lifespan** | **83%** |
| **OVERALL** | **87%** |



**Publisher:** Data East
**Developer:** Exidy
**Release:** 1984
**Price:** 10p Per Play

**Every now and then a game arrives that becomes an instant classic.** Games like *Pac-Man*, for example, are instantly playable and have kept us entertained for ages. The good news is that we've been playing *Boulder Dash* for the last couple of weeks, and it's safe to say we'll be playing it for years to come too.

Due to hit home formats soon, the arcade game is easy to get into but hard to master. You play Rockford – an explorer searching caves to find gems amongst the rubble. The problem is that one wrong move could result in you being crushed to death by a boulder or attacked by one of the fierce creatures that lurk in the caverns.

All you have to do is dig your way through the soil by moving the joystick in the direction you want to go, and avoid any dangers that present themselves. Once you've unearthed enough gems, the exit is

**Publisher:** SEGA
**Developer:** SEGA
**Release:** 1989
**Price:** £29.99

**While NES owners have got a range of decent platform games to play, Master System owners haven't had much of a choice since the machine's launch three years ago.** Now, however, the quality titles are beginning to filter through and, at

### *In Retrospect*

**Since the release of *Psycho Fox*, a number of better platform games have been developed, including *DecapAttack*, which is actually based on this title. That said, it's still a very playable little game, though you may be surprised at just how difficult it is. Definitely worth a play, but don't expect anything to match the quality of *Super Mario World*.**

# Boulder Dash

## In Retrospect

*Boulder Dash* remains one of the most playable games ever created. Like a lot of classic retro titles, it's the sheer simplicity that makes it so good. For five minutes or a whole afternoon, there's plenty of fun to be had.

**DARRAN** *Boulder Dash* is great. I loved *Mr Do* and this game features a similar concept with completely new execution. I'm really enjoying helping Rockford to fulfil his lust for diamonds and have fallen in love with the fantastic level design and straightforward gameplay. There are some fiendishly tricky mines to negotiate and it will take real skill to get through all 16 levels. The way Rockford gets crushed by a boulder if he's not quick enough is terrific, and I like the fact that you're constantly fighting against an ever-decreasing time limit. If you're a puzzle fan like me I urge you to spend as many 10p's on it as possible – you won't be disappointed.

highlighted and you can move onto the next stage.

And that's pretty much all there is to do for 16 magical worlds. But don't be fooled by the simplistic nature of the game – some of the later stages are incredibly tricky to master and require a lot of planning. For instance, in places the only way to get to the gems is to start a landslide of boulders rolling towards you, then quickly dodge in and out of them until you get to safety. Because of this harsh difficulty curve, some players may find *Boulder Dash* frustrating, But stick with it and you'll discover a truly enjoyable and rewarding experience.

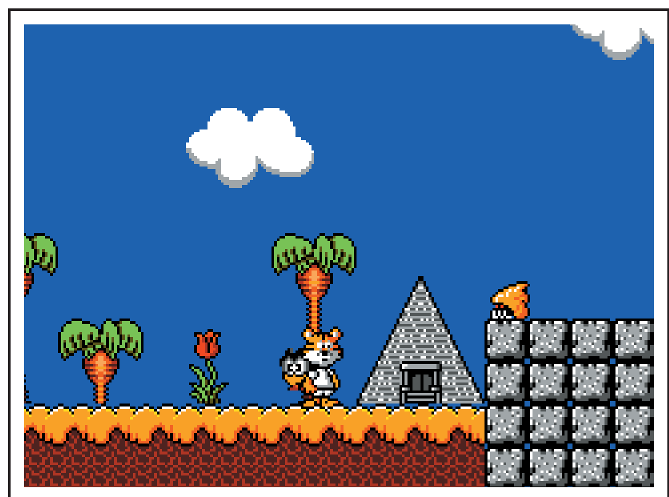
| | |
|---|---|
| Presentation: | 85% |
| Graphics: | 90% |
| Sound: | 78% |
| Gameplay | 92% |
| Lifespan | 91% |
| **OVERALL** | **90%** |




# Psycho Fox

**KEITH** I have to admit that I'm a bit of a one for cutesy platform games and this really hits all my buttons. Great graphics and sound, and it's a real challenge too. The best part is that you really have to learn how to make the best of every situation, using whatever the level has to offer to help you on your way. And don't be fooled by the colourful visuals, either – only the best players are going to get to the end of this.

▼ NES owners have been smug about Mario for long enough, so *Psycho Fox* should sort that out. Vive le fox!



last, SEGA's console is being blessed with releases that come close to, if not match, Nintendo's level of excellence.

As the title suggests, you control Psycho Fox – a striking little fellow with a sidekick called Bird Fly. The aim of the game is to get through seven zones, each with an end-of-level boss, until you get to finally get to Madfox himself. Madfox plans to take over the world and make it his own, so it's up to you to stop him.

The graphics are clean and sharp, and, thanks to the Master System's superior colour palette, everything is richer than similar titles on Nintendo. Although the first area looks much like any other platform game, you soon discover that *Psycho Fox* offers more than what meets the eye.

You'll need to learn to use the environments to your advantage – later stages include Wind Zone, in which you need to use the breeze to get to hard-to-reach platforms, and Ice Zone, where things get a bit slippery. There are also three other playable characters in the form of a tiger that can run fast, a monkey that can jump high, and a hippo that's extremely strong. Each of these elements helps to make *Psycho Fox* into something of a Master System classic-in-waiting.

The only major problem we can find is that once you've completed the game – something that may take you a while – there's not that much to go back to. While the *Mario* games feature numerous secret rooms filled with coins and extra lives, *Psycho Fox* tends to be a far more linear affair. But for SEGA fans who need some solid platform action, this is spot on.

| | |
|---|---|
| Presentation: | 79% |
| Graphics: | 90% |
| Sound: | 87% |
| Gameplay | 91% |
| Lifespan | 83% |
| **OVERALL** | **88%** |

# JIM BAGLEY



***There aren't many developers who can claim to have more than 18 years' experience in the games industry, but then not everyone is as dedicated as Jim Bagley. Fluent in more than a dozen programming languages, Bagley has created products for just about every games format from the ZX Spectrum to the PSone and Game Boy Advance. We chat to the man himself and take a look at his illustrious career.***

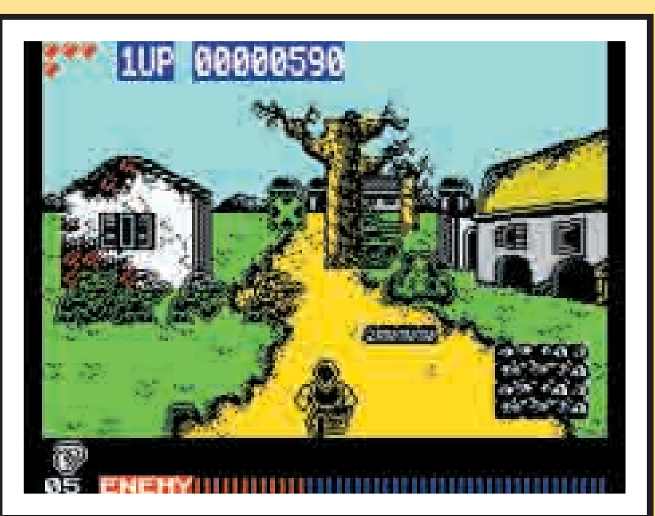
**interviewed by KEITH EDWARDS**

**GROWING UP IN Birkenhead during the Seventies and Eighties, Jim Bagley's first gaming experience was on *Space Invaders* at The Bright Spot – an arcade on the New Brighton Promenade that's still there today. Like many youngsters, Bagley became a fan of this new digital entertainment, but he never expected to own a games machine of his own.**

"The first system I ever owned was the Sinclair ZX81, which my mum got me for Christmas in 1982," he says. "It was a big surprise for me because we were quite a poor family, but happy." Bagley's first attempts at programming had been at school a couple of years before getting his own machine. "They had Sharp MZ80 Ks and one BBC Micro, which was a little bit better than the ZX81," he laughs. Of course, computing was still a relatively new subject in schools back then, and even though it was on the curriculum, Bagley admits to being his own tutor for much of the time. "I basically had to teach myself to program because our computer teacher was a converted maths teacher and didn't really know anything," he says. Despite such hurdles, he was soon creating his own games by looking up the basic commands in a ZX81 manual and making slight changes to the simple codes he had learned at school.

By the age of 16, Bagley had taught himself enough to get his first

▲ "I enjoyed doing *Road Runner* because it was Road Runner! And it got to the number-one position in the charts"




▲ "*Cabal* was a good arcade shooter and I think we did a good conversion of it… for a Spectrum"

## BAGLEY THE BIKER

**Being a keen biker, Bagley has a few interesting things to say about motorbike games and why even the most advanced simulations aren't comparable to the real thing. "I love motorbikes, but, unfortunately, no bike game compares to the real thing. The problem is that if you're on a bend and go onto the grass you don't go sliding, which is what would happen," he explains. So now you know.**

job in the videogames industry, though his route in was rather unconventional. "I was in my local computer shop looking at the games I couldn't afford and, as I was a regular, I was talking to the boss, asking if there were any computer companies locally," he explains. "I thought they would all be in London, but to my surprise he said there was one nearby called Consult Computer Systems that came in with their games. He said he'd ask them if there were any jobs going for me if I wanted, and of course I said 'yes please'! Later that week I got my first job on *Throne Of Fire*. I was taken on and got paid a whopping £35 a week through YTS."

### MOVING ON UP

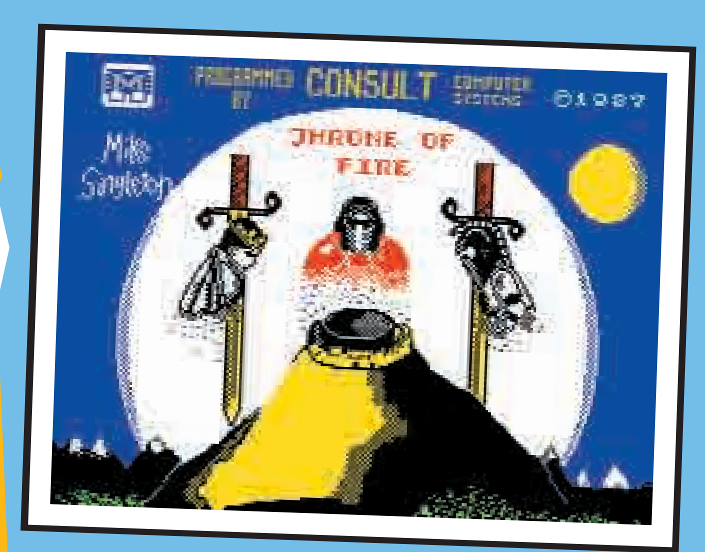
Since then, Bagley has worked on an astonishing 39 titles – an average of more than two a year – often as the sole programmer. He admits that it's almost impossible to pick out the project he's enjoyed working on the most, though he recalls *Doom* on the SEGA Saturn being a bit of a nightmare. "John Carmack [*Doom*'s creator] wouldn't let me use the hardware, so it was like a DX33 running *Doom* in full resolution," he says. "I had to get it all in Assembler and split into two processors drawing it at the same time, but the gamers don't see that side of things, unfortunately. It was still an enjoyable project, though, because it was challenging."

Thankfully, it wasn't long before Bagley got to sample more user-friendly formats like the PlayStation and Game Boy Color. One of the memorable projects he worked on during that time was *Tommi Makinen Rally* on the PSone – a game that had the unfortunate task of going up against *Colin McRae Rally* in the shops. "We weren't developing it to compete with *Colin McRae* as we didn't know they were doing it at the time," Bagley insists. "We were just doing it to save some grace for Europress. With its previous PSone engine, maps took forever to adjust in a very un-user-friendly editor, so we got everyone 3D Maxxed up and I made the exporter so that once it had its map created using Max, with the click of a button it was exported into the game and viewable on the PSone in less than a minute." Clever stuff.

And on the subject of clever stuff, Bagley has worked extensively with Nintendo's GBC and GBA, and has created programs that exploit both consoles to their fullest. "For the GBC I wrote a routing that displayed more colours than the normal 54 that were available – basically about 2,000 colours, but still allowing lots of sprites to go over the top. This hasn't been achieved by anyone else, as far as I'm aware," he says. "I've also written sprite grabbers that convert pro-motion animation files into data ready to use on GBA." Of course, Bagley is aware that his days programming 2D games are numbered, what with Sony's PSP and Nintendo's DS just around the corner. And as capable as he is at programming 3D titles, you get the impression that he'll miss working in the classic style that first attracted him to videogames.

### GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

But there's more to life than videogames, and as well as considering which programming direction to take, Bagley also has other priorities. "It's very difficult to juggle your career with family life, but I'm lucky in the sense that I work from home, so I get so see my daughter grow up," he says. Also a keen biker, he even finds the time to read all the emails he receives from fans, and it's clear just how touched he is by their support. "I've enjoyed getting mails from lots of people all over the world saying that they grew up playing my games," he says. "Probably the most satisfying part of doing the games is knowing that people enjoy playing them."




## SOFTOGRAPHY

- **Throne Of Fire** (Spectrum)
- **Road Runner** (Spectrum)
- **Street Sports Basketball** (Spectrum)
- **World Class Leaderboard** (Spectrum)
- **Gutz** (Spectrum)
- **Batman Caped Crusader** (Spectrum)
- **Red Heat** (Spectrum/Amstrad)
- **Cabal** (Spectrum/Amstrad)
- **Midnight Resistance** (Spectrum/Amstrad)
- **Hudson Hawk** (Spectrum/Amstrad/Game Boy)
- **Ultimate Soccer** (Game Gear/Master System)
- **Defender Joust** (Game Boy)
- **Striker** (Mega Drive/32X)
- **Revolution X** (PC/Saturn)
- **Doom** (Saturn)
- **Tommi Makinen Rally** (PSone)
- **Premier League Stars** (PSone)
- **Supreme Snowboarding/Boarder Zone** (GBC)
- **Tiny Toons: Buster Saves The Day** (GBC)
- **MTV Sports: TJ Lavin's Ultimate BMX** (GBC)
- **TechDeck Skateboarding** (GBC)
- **Nancy Drew: Message In A Haunted Mansion** (GBA)
- **Strike Force Hydra** (PSone)
- **IK+** (PSone/GBA)
- **Super Dropzone** (PSone/GBA)
- **World Tennis Stars** (PSone/GBA)
- **Animal Snap** (PSone/GBA)

# Retro Contact

## Share your views about old-school gaming

**First Contact**
**If you're into retro gaming and you've got something to share with the world, why not write to us at:**
**games™ Retro, Highbury Entertainment Ltd, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS Or you can email: gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

### ULTRA VIOLENCE

**Dear games™,**
I have just read one of your articles under 'This Month In 1982' called 'How Much Is Too Much?' [Retro, issue 15]. It went on about how violent games were back then and what they are like compared to today. It also had a picture of probably one of the best beat-'em-ups ever (to me, anyway). It was of Scorpion versus Sub-Zero from the first *Mortal Kombat*. People complained about violence then, but get with it, people – nearly every game out today is based around violence.

Being a huge *Mortal Kombat* fan, I'm used to the violence and, even though I've been playing those sorts of games since I was a kid, it hasn't changed the way I act or my personality. I'm always playing *Mortal Kombat Trilogy* on my PSone and enjoy every minute of it.
**Sherri Phillips, Portsmouth**

**■ You seem to have got the wrong end of the stick, Sherri. What we were actually pointing out in that article is that the topic of violence in videogames wasn't really discussed until the likes of *Mortal Kombat* were released. Scientists had started looking into the possible effects of playing games as early as 1982, but as it was still a relatively new pastime their findings were pretty inconclusive.**

**Anyway, how can you be sure that playing violent videogames hasn't altered your personality? What might seem normal to you may look positively homicidal to someone else… And as for every game being based around violence, have you ever heard of *Dance Dance Revolution*?**



### RETRO PRICES

**Dear games™,**
I'm a big fan of retro gaming and have so far procured for myself a SNES, N64, Saturn and a Dreamcast, all for slightly lower prices than those quoted in your Buyers' Guide. My latest buy was an Atari 7800 (unboxed) with one controller and four boxed games for £35. However, I noticed that this console doesn't merit a mention in your Buyers' Guide. So my question really is have I been ripped off or what?
**Greig Houston, Glasgow**

### Hidden Treasures

**Dear games™**
Regarding Darren Stoggles' efforts to get *Radiant Silvergun* as a budget title [Retro Contact, issue 16], don't be so sure that Treasure wouldn't go for it. Its PS2 title *Stretch Panic* is currently available over here, re-titled *Freak Out*, for the princely sum of £15.

A lot of the budget titles available over here are actually cheesily repackaged versions of Japanese best-sellers, so it's always worth checking gamefaqs.com if you see a cheap-looking game hidden away on the bottom shelf of your local game shop – it lists the games under both their Japanese and English titles, so you might find that crap-looking budget game is actually a bargain in disguise.

The bizarre thing is none of them seem to have any reference (on the packaging at least) to the game's Eastern origins. Maybe they don't think hardcore Japanophile otaku do their shopping at Morrisons or something…
**Jamie Hancock**




**■ Your point about *Radiant Silvergun* would be valid if it wasn't for one fundamental flaw: *Stretch Panic* was already running on PS2 in Japan, so bringing it to Europe was an easy task. *Radiant Silvergun*, on the other hand, was running on SEGA Saturn hardware, so it would need to be totally recoded to work on any of the current formats. And seeing as the game would, more than likely, only ever be a niche title, it wouldn't really be worthwhile paying to get it translated.**

**Saying that, there's been a rumour going around for ages about a compilation pack called *Treasure Box*, and we're still keeping our fingers crossed that it turns out to be true. As for your advice on cheap games that are tucked away on the shelves of your local games store, you're right – there are some great titles out there that have gone virtually unnoticed. However, there are also a great many awful games, so make sure you can return any unwanted items if they turn out to be rubbish.**

# STAR LETTER ■ STAR LETTER ■

**Dear games™,**
I was just reading your magazine and I had the strangest experience. I was looking through the Retro pages and I thought to myself, 'bloomin' heck! why don't they mention the classic that was the Philips CDi?' I even told someone I was going to write in about it and plead for a feature on it, and then what happens? I turn to Retro Contact and read the star letter. Great minds think alike, it seems, as someone had beaten me to the star letter prize and written about the CDi for me.

I do have to ask, though, why can't you compile 80 screenshots for the machine? There were, after all, 142 games released on it [thanks for the list, but we have't got room to print it – Ed]. In fact, I just did a quick search for CDi on eBay and there's lots of stuff available – so much stuff that I might just have to go and add to my collection.

I hope you do a feature on the beloved CDi – I had some seriously good gaming moments on the machine. I had my first experience of online gaming on it, and it had the prettiest version of *Tetris* I've seen. Plus *Mad Dog McCree* mixed gameplay with video footage, which was certainly different at the time.

Anyway, that ends my Philips CDi support speech. Thanks.
**Lis Ries, via email**

**■ Thanks for your letter and that enormous list of games, Lis. We can't say that we've heard of a lot of them, but there were obviously people out there who bought them. The problem we have, however, is finding someone willing to lend us 80 CDi games to take screenshots from. But don't fret, we're on the case and we'll definitely be covering the format sometime in the future.**

**And as for someone beating you to the star letter prize, the long list of CDi games you included in your email has won you a prize of your own. If anyone else out there knows of a console, computer or game we should be covering, be sure to write in and let us know about it.**

**■ Our price guide is merely a rough pointer as to how much you should be paying – if you shop around there are always bargains to be had. If anything, our prices are set a little high so you can tell if you're being fleeced (though, obviously, you can expect to pay much more for something in immaculate condition with all its packaging and manuals). With regard to the 7800, it wasn't nearly as popular as the 2600 so it's difficult to know exactly how much they're worth these days. Thirty-five pounds sounds like a fairly decent price, though we'd have to know which games were included and the general condition of the hardware to tell you if you'd found a real gem.**

## LUCK OF THE DRAW

**Dear games™,**
In your latest issue I noticed that some of the pages featured little drawings that related to the games. I thought they were really funny and brought added character to the already brilliant section. I particularly like the Greatest Retro Game Ever pages with the ducks on them – they were great.
**Dan Summers, via email**

**■ Those were the work of our two talented designers who have been working flat-out to ensure that the flavour of the retro section is every bit as delicious as old-school magazines. You'll see a number of changes in the Retro pages over the coming months, including more in-depth features, more developer interviews and even more hand-drawn artwork. Let us know what you think, unless you think it's crap because then we'll just get really upset.**

## HAMMER TIME

**Dear games™,**
I enjoyed reading the *Street Fighter* Family Tree in issue 15 but I think you missed out a *Street Fighter* game. Years ago when it was my birthday, me and a friend went to an arcade and I saw one of those games where you hit the animals that pop out the holes with a mallet, but it had characters from *Street Fighter II* in it.

On the screen there were super-deformed versions of Ryu and Chun Li. They were armed with hammers and were hitting M Bison into a hole. When he was fully knocked in he jumped out again.

Sadly, I can't remember the name of the arcade, but I swear I saw this machine. Any ideas what this game was called?
**Daniel Heath, via email**

**■ There are a few really rare *Street Fighter* titles that we didn't feature in the Family Tree, simply because they're not really videogames as such. The one you're talking about fits into that category, along with pinball machines and other such spin-offs. We've had to limit ourselves as to what we include in Family Trees or we'd run out of space. The machine you saw was called *Street Fighter: Wack-A-Bison* and the aim was, you guessed it, to whack the pop-up M Bisons.**




**Retro Contact is sponsored by Joystick Junkies. Each month's Star Letter will win its author an item of retro gaming clothing of their choice worth up to £20.**

Retro

# C·L·A·S·S·I·C C·O·N·S·O·L·E

## BUYERS GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

# BUYERS GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

### 3DO

| | |
|---|---|
| Panasonic 3DO | £60 |
| Goldstar 3DO | £50-60 |

### ACORN COMPUTERS

| | |
|---|---|
| BBC Micro | £50 |
| Acorn Electron | £40 |

### AMSTRAD

| | |
|---|---|
| Amstrad CPC 464 | £20 |
| Amstrad CPC 664 | £20-25 |
| Amstrad CPC 6128 | £25 |
| Amstrad GX4000 | £50 |

### ATARI

| | |
|---|---|
| Atari VCS 2600 | £30 (wooden models tend to cost more) |
| Atari ST | £40 (with software) |
| Atari Lynx | £35 (the original model costs less) |
| Atari Jaguar | £25 |

### COMMODORE

| | |
|---|---|
| Commodore Vic 20 | £15-20 |
| Commodore 64 | £25-35 (varies according to model) |
| Commodore Amiga | £35-40 (varies according to model) |
| Commodore CDTV | £50-60 |
| C64GS | £50 (becoming more sought-after) |
| Commodore CD32 | £35 |

### MISC

| | |
|---|---|
| GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics) | £20-250 |
| MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley) | £175-200 |
| JAMMA compatible cabinets | £100-350 (depending on model) |
| Supergun | £150-200 (varies according to model) |

### NEC

| | |
|---|---|
| PC Engine | £70-80 |
| Turbo Grafx-16 | £50-60 |
| Turbo Duo | £100-150 |
| PC Engine GT | £150-200 |
| Super Grafx | £200-250 |

### NINTENDO

| | |
|---|---|
| Game & Watch | £15-50 (depending on title) |
| Nintendo Entertainment System | £15-20 |
| Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket | £10 |
| Game Boy Color | £15 |
| Super Nintendo | £20-25 |
| Virtual Boy | £75-100 |
| Nintendo 64 | £20-25 |

### SEGA

| | |
|---|---|
| Master System | £20 |
| Mega Drive | £20-25 |
| Game Gear | £35-40 |
| Mega CD | £40-60 |
| SEGA 32X | £30 |
| SEGA Nomad | £75-100 |
| SEGA Saturn | £30 |
| Dreamcast | £25-30 |

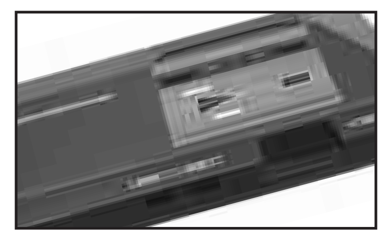
### SINCLAIR

| | |
|---|---|
| Sinclair ZX-81 | £40 |
| ZX Spectrum 48K | £40-50 |
| ZX Spectrum + | £30 |
| ZX Spectrum 128K | £40 |
| ZX Spectrum +2 | £35 |
| ZX Spectrum +3 | £40 |

### SNK

| | |
|---|---|
| Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system) (prices for multi-slots are higher) | £70 |
| Neo Geo AES (home system) | £175-225 |
| Neo Geo CD | £125-175 |
| Neo Geo CDZ | £150-175 |
| Neo Geo Pocket Color | £40-50 |

## CONSOLE OF THE MONTH



- **NAME:** SEGA MASTER SYSTEM
- **PRICE:** £20 (with games)
- **THREE OF THE BEST:**
  *Sonic The Hedgehog* (est. price £2)
  *Psycho Fox* (est. price £4)
  *AK In Miracle World* (est. price £1.50)
- Master System II consoles can often be found very cheaply at car boot sales, but if you want the original design you'll have to dig a little deeper.

## HOW TO USE GAMES TRADING MARKET

### SELLING

Simply send the following to: gtm@paragon.co.uk
■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18)
■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The item(s) you wish to sell (no more than five per month) ■ The condition of the item(s) ■ How much you want for the item(s)
Each item will be listed along with your region.

### BUYING

Mail the following details to: gtm@paragon.co.uk
■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18)
■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The reference number for the item you want. Your email address will be passed to the seller, who will contact you to close the deal and arrange payment and delivery. This runs on a first come, first served basis.

### WANTED

Contact us in the same way as above stating what items you want and any preferences on condition or price.

### GTM RULES AND SMALL PRINT

This service is for private sellers, not dealers. Retro items only (nothing post-Dreamcast). No Mega Drive *FIFA* games – everyone has at least two. Highbury Entertainment Ltd cannot take responsibility for items lost or broken in the post.

BUY & SELL your retro games with games™

# GAMES TRADING MARKET

**Searching for an elusive copy of Radiant Silvergun? Want to sell that pile of Spectrum games taking up space around the house? Then check out GTM, the most authentic retro sales column in the world.**

## FOR SALE

**Lot 50 – *Boxed SEGA Saturn*** with 12 games, all boxed with instructions. All leads, two pads and one demo disc included, though the console box is missing its internal packaging. £60. Lancashire.

**Lot 53 – *Knight Lore*** for Spectrum. Boxed, instructions. £1 plus p+p. North Yorkshire.

**Lot 54 – *Star Wars Arcade*** for Atari VCS. Boxed with instructions. £8 plus p+p. North Yorkshire.

**Lot 55 – *Uridium*** for C64. Boxed with instructions. £1 plus p+p. North Yorkshire.

**Lot 61 – *Bubble Bobble*** (UK version) for Commodore 64. Complete. 50p plus p+p. North Yorkshire.

**Lot 62 – *Escape From Singe's Castle*** (UK version) for Commodore 64. £1 plus p+p. North Yorkshire.

**Lot 63 – *Streets Of Rage 2*** (PAL) for SEGA Mega Drive. Complete. £3 plus p+p. North Yorkshire.

**Lot 64 – *Battle Squadron*** (UK version) for Mega Drive. Boxed with instructions. £2 plus p+p. Bristol. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

**Lot 65 – *Circus*** (UK version) for Atari 2600. Boxed with instructions. £3.50 plus p+p. Bristol. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

**Lot 66 – *F/A-18 Interceptor*** (UK version) for Amiga. Boxed with instructions. £2. Bristol. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

**Lot 67 – *Golden Axe 3*** (Japanese version) for Mega Drive. Boxed with instructions. £25 plus p+p. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

**Lot 68 – *Virtua Fighter Remix*** (Japanese version) for Saturn. Boxed with instructions. £3.50 plus p+p. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

**Lot 69 – *Harvest Moon*** for Game Boy Color. Like new. £16. Bucks.

**Lot 70 – *R-Type DX*** for Game Boy Color. Like new. £16. Bucks.

**Lot 71 – *Fantasia*** for SEGA Mega Drive. Very good condition. £10. Bucks.

**Lot 72 – *Aladdin*** for SEGA Mega Drive. Very good condition. £10. Bucks.

**Lot 73 – *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*** for SEGA Mega Drive. Very good condition. £10. Bucks.

**Lot 74 – *Street Fighter II*** arcade JAMMA board. Good working order. £50. Wilts.

**Lot 75 – *Yu Suzuki Gameworks*** book with Dreamcast disc of six classic arcade titles, including *OutRun*, *Afterburner* etc. Mint condition. £50. Wilts.

## WANTED

**WANTED 34** – ***Disc World*** for PlayStation. Must be complete and in good condition. Gloucester.

**WANTED 35 – *The King Of Fighters 2001* or *2002*** for Neo Geo AES. Must be boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

**WANTED 36 – Commodore 64** and any games published by either Hewson or 21st Century Entertainment. Manchester.

**WANTED 37 – *Super Bomberman*** for Super Nintendo.

**WANTED 38 – *Mean Machines* magazines.** Any issues, but not 3, 14, 15 or 19. Must be in good condition. Price negotiable. London.

**Wanted 39 – *Waku Waku 7*** or ***Galaxy Fight*** for Neo-Geo AES. Must be boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

**Wanted 40 – *Mega Drive II*** in good condition. Essex.

**Wanted 41 – *SEGA 32X*.** Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £40. Cambridgeshire.

**Wanted 42 – *Knuckles Chaotix*** for SEGA 32X. Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £15. Cambridgeshire.

**Wanted 43 – *SEGA 32X*** games. Any considered. Cambridgeshire.

**Wanted 44 – *Sonic CD*** for SEGA Mega CD. Will pay up to £30.

**Wanted 45 – *Street Fighter Alpha*** for Super Nintendo. Must be in perfect order and preferably with box and instruction manual. Cork.

### GAMES™ RETRO CLASSIFIEDS

Send to: **GTM, games™, Highbury Entertainment Ltd, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS or email gtm@paragon.co.uk**

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Address....................................................................................

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**Tick classified heading**

❑ **FOR SALE** ❑ **WANTED**

Write your advertisement here, one word per box, and only include your name, address, phone number and/or email address below if you want them printed.

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# Crossword Challenge

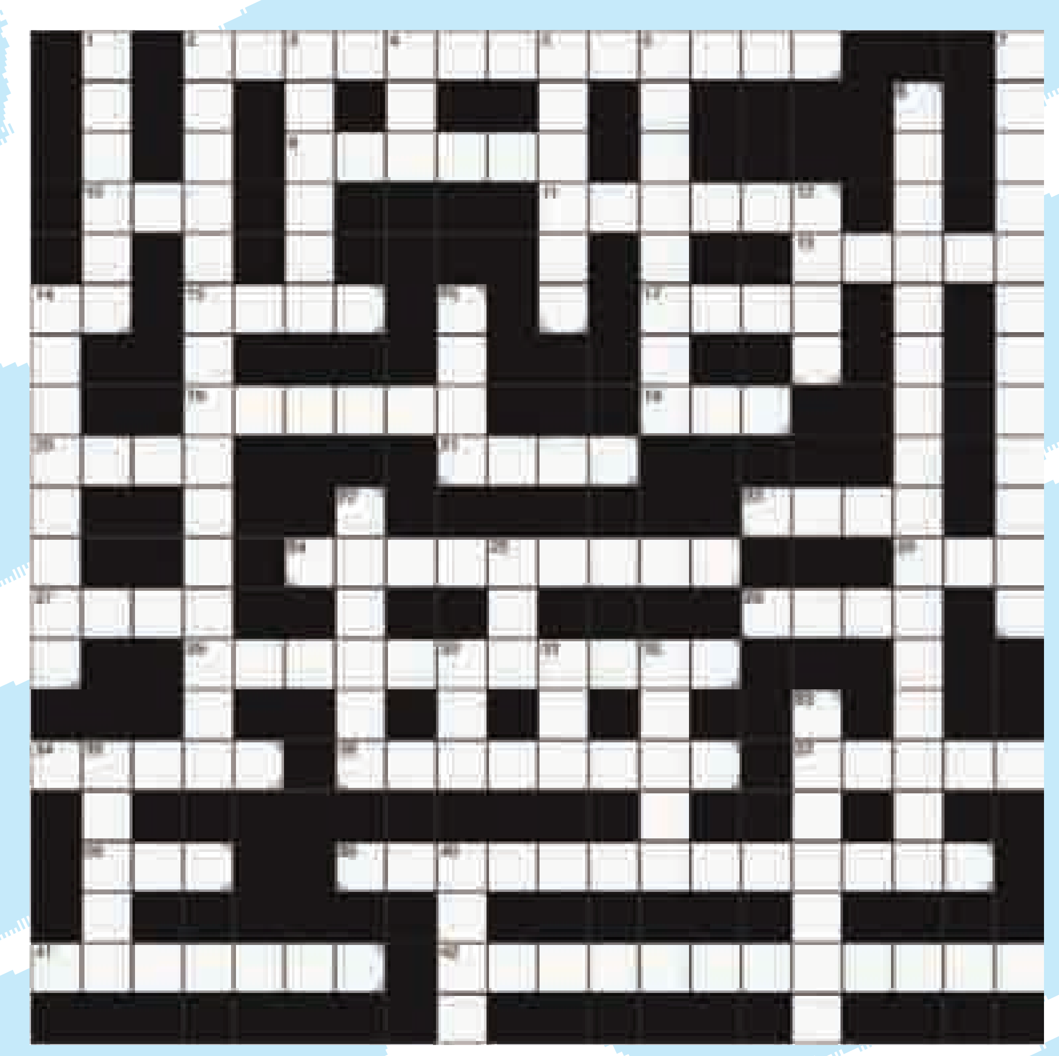
*Test your gaming knowledge with our retro-themed crossword*

## ACROSS

2. The original alien vertical shooter (5,8)
9. Rare's 'marvellous' character (6)
10. Dreamcast's lost treasure (---) *Beat* (3)
11. Earl's best buddy (6)
13. Friendly word preceding 500, 600 and 1200 (5)
14. SEGA's Suzuki (2)
15. Our type of developer (4)
17. id made this (4)
18. Fancy a spin at Palm Beach? (3,3)
19. The R from RGB (3)
20. Alpha male Muay Tai master (4)
21. Double-D kid (4)
23. Japanese robot costume (4)
24. *Sonic*'s fourth zone and David Bowie movie (9)
26. I'm so dizzy (3)
27. Robin Williams' SNES game (4)
28. A widespread rash (4)
29. *Symphony* artist and same surname as Hideo (5,6)
34. Nintendo's prime heroine (5)
36. Japanese company that's in god's hands (8)
37. Famous lake featured in *ESPN Extreme Games* (5)
38. Miss Umenokouji's first name (3)
39. Bare-knuckle fighting (7,2,4)
41. Harry had better watch out (3,4)
42. This blasted off the online dream (3,3,6)

## DOWN

1. *Yie Ar* fighting style (4,2)
2. Eikichi Kawasaki's company (4,5,6)
3. Go here to play coin-ops (6)
4. Before he became Hayate, this was his name (3)
5. Word preceding *Racing, Cop* and *Fighter* (6)
6. Classic 1980 shoot-'em-up from Midway (8)
7. Ozzy Osborne would be good at this (5,2,5)
8. SEGA's spikey blue hero (5,3,8)
12. Arcade emulator (4)
14. Ex-Nintendo president, Hiroshi (--------) (8)
16. A secret became a legend (4)
22. He's armless… and legless (6)
25. Star of *Shenmue* (3)
30. He was the master of *Street Fighter II* (3)
31. Popular *Fatal Fury* fighter, (---) Higashi (3)
32. This greedy king's name was featured in *Tomb Raider* (5)
33. *Lylat Wars* in America (7)
35. Infogrames' new old name (5)
40. Word following *Mega* and *Space* (4)



## NEXT MONTH IN RETRO!

Find out everything you need to know about the BBC Micro
We take an in-depth look at ninja games and their stars
Is *Samurai Shodown* the greatest game ever?



## PLUS!

More games that time forgot
More great retro gaming moments
More retro reviews


eMag

# ESSENTIALS

**TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…**

# PLAYSTATION2

**MANUFACTURER** Sony **UK LAUNCH DATE** 24 November 2000 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £139.99



**The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox.** With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.

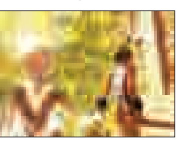
## TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

| No. | Title | Publisher | Developer | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ico | SCEE | In-House | Possibly the most beautiful game ever made |
| 2 | Grand Theft Auto: Vice City | Rockstar Games | Rockstar North | Enough content to keep you going for ages |
| 3 | Pro Evolution Soccer 3 | Konami | In-House | If you only own one football game, it should be this |
| 4 | Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness IMPORT | Atlus | Nippon Ichi | Like your RPGs practically endless? Then this is for you |
| 5 | Dark Chronicle | Sony | In-House | In-depth RPGs don't come much bigger than this |
| 6 | Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time | Ubisoft | In-House | Ubisoft shows how to make a proper retro update |
| 7 | Rez | SEGA | UGA | Deceptively simple – draws you in before you know it |
| 8 | Amplitude | Sony | Harmonix | Music games have never needed as much skill as this |
| 9 | Beyond Good & Evil | Ubisoft | In-House | A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait |
| 10 | Tony Hawk's Underground | Activision | Neversoft | The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series |
| 11 | SSX 3 | Electronic Arts | EA Sports BIG | The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world |
| 12 | Suikoden III IMPORT | Konami | In-House | Konami's RPG series is still as good as it ever was |
| 13 | Metal Slug 3 IMPORT | Playmore | In-House | Old-school shooting has never been so much fun |
| 14 | Freedom Fighters | Electronic Arts | Io Interactive | Top-notch squad-based action with an arcade twist |
| 15 | NBA Street 2 | Electronic Arts | EA Sports BIG | The daddy of basketball games – no contest |
| 16 | Colin McRae Rally 04 | Codemasters | In-House | Realistic racing for the purist in all of us |
| 17 | Project Zero | Wanadoo | Tecmo | Scarier than anything else out there today |
| 18 | Burnout 2: Point Of Impact | Acclaim | Criterion | Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F |
| 19 | Hitman 2: Silent Assassin | Eidos | Io Interactive | Silent but deadly – a real killer of a game |
| 20 | Devil May Cry | Capcom | In-House | The original is still the best by a long shot |

## FIVE-CARD DRAW

Ico

By now you should have realised that we're not going to stop telling you to buy *Ico*. It's a crime if you don't.



GTA: Vice City

Rockstar's free-roaming franchise just keeps on rolling. No doubt the twin pack will sell like mad…



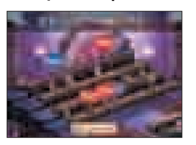
Pro Evolution Soccer 3

Considering Konami's series exists, you have to wonder why other people keep making footy games.



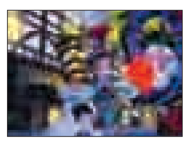
Disgaea

You know how we said that *Dark Chronicle* was big? Well, this is bigger. Shame it's only out on import.



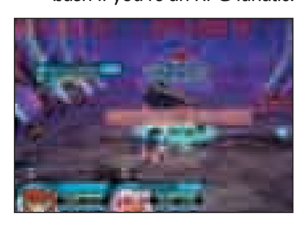
Dark Chronicle

Of course, PAL gamers can still take solace in the fact that Sony's epic RPG is pretty damn huge too.



VIEWPOINT
### .HACK//INFECTION

Who needs online gaming when you can have all the pleasures on your own? Well, us for starters. However, that doesn't mean Bandai's innovative attempt at creating an offline MMORPG has gone unappreciated – it's worth a bash if you're an RPG fanatic.



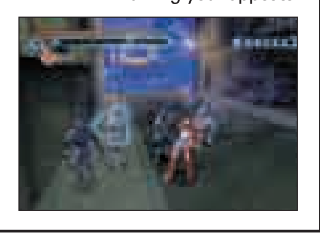
VIEWPOINT
### FORBIDDEN SIREN

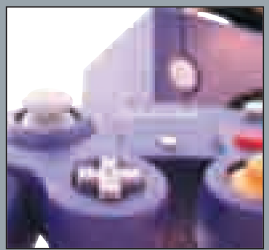
Sony might have had a chance at dominating the survival horror genre with *Forbidden Siren* if it hadn't been for the god-awful voice acting dubbed onto its high-class scare-'em-up. Still, there's always the possibility of a sequel around the corner.



VIEWPOINT
### NIGHTSHADE

A sequel that's better than the last game, that wasn't as good as the one before that? We're confused now. Thankfully, *Nightshade* at least manages to bring back some of the familiar *Shinobi* flavour we used to love, without ruining your appetite.






# XBOX

**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft **UK LAUNCH DATE** 13 March 2002 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £129.99



**Despite a slow start, the Xbox has swiftly become one of the major players in today's console market.** Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to the casual gamer than most PCs.

## TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

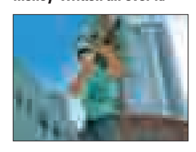
| No. | Title | Publisher | Developer | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Project Gotham Racing 2 | Microsoft | Bizarre Creations | Redefining how we play games online |
| 2 | Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack | Rockstar Games | Rockstar North | The best versions of *GTA III* and *Vice City*, without a doubt |
| 3 | Halo | Microsoft | Bungie | The game that sold a million Xbox consoles |
| 4 | Jet Set Radio Future | SEGA | Smilebit | Cel-shading at its very best and a soundtrack to die for |
| 5 | Knights Of The Old Republic | Activision | BioWare | One of the best *Star Wars* games ever made |
| 6 | Splinter Cell | Ubisoft | In-House | Who needs Solid Snake when you've got Sam Fisher? |
| 7 | TimeSplitters 2 | Eidos | Free Radical | More multiplayer fun than most other FPS games |
| 8 | Panzer Dragoon Orta | SEGA | Smilebit | Classic shoot-'em-up action, the SEGA way |
| 9 | Tony Hawk's Underground | Activision | Neversoft | The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series |
| 10 | Project Zero | Microsoft | Tecmo | Scarier than anything else out there today |
| 11 | Burnout 2: Point Of Impact | Acclaim | Criterion Studios | Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F |
| 12 | Beyond Good & Evil | Ubisoft | In-House | A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait |
| 13 | Soul Calibur II | Namco | In-House | The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay |
| 14 | SSX 3 | Electronic Arts | EA Sports BIG | The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world |
| 15 | Moto GP | THQ | Climax | Bargain-priced motorbike racing action |
| 16 | Hitman 2: Silent Assassin | Eidos | Io Interactive | Silent but deadly – a real killer of a title |
| 17 | Deus Ex: Invisible War | Eidos | Ion Storm | Freestyle adventuring with a decent first-person twist |
| 18 | Freedom Fighters | Electronic Arts | Io Interactive | Top-notch squad-based action with an arcade twist |
| 19 | Colin McRae Rally 04 | Codemasters | In-House | Realistic racing for the purist in all of us |
| 20 | Rainbow Six 3 | Ubisoft | In-House | Fairly decent action-strategy that comes alive online |

## CARIBBEAN STUD

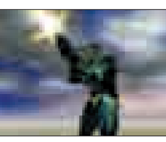
Project Gotham Racing 2
**We admit it – we're addicted to online racing. If only because it means we've got loads more friends.**



GTA: Double Pack
**Rockstar's belated release of the PS2's best-selling titles has 'value for money' written all over it.**



Halo
**Great AI, but is it really the best Xbox game ever? Hopefully, the arrival of the sequel will answer that.**



Jet Set Radio Future
**It might have a lot to answer for as far as cel-shading goes, but we still love a bit of graffiti.**

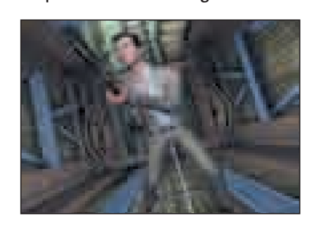


Star Wars: KOTOR
**Believe the hype – as long as you can take all the stats, this really is the best *Star Wars* game in ages.**



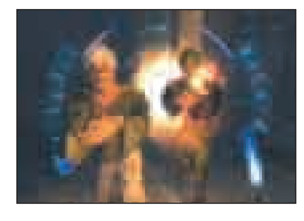
VIEWPOINT
### 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

It might be a fairly bog-standard Bond romp in the long run, but there's no denying that EA knows a thing or two about presentation. Not only does the Xbox version look very nice, but the opening sequence is something else…



VIEWPOINT
### DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

PC owners branded it too simple, while Xbox gamers said it was too complicated. There's just no pleasing some people. For the rest of us, though, *Invisible War* is absorbing enough to see you through a good few nights.



VIEWPOINT
### RAINBOW SIX 3

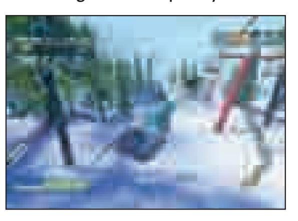
Online terrorist slaughtering, anyone? Having sampled the delights of both this and Xbox *Counter-Strike*, we're of the opinion that Ubisoft's effort comes out on top – although we suspect some of you might like to disagree with us. You're wrong.



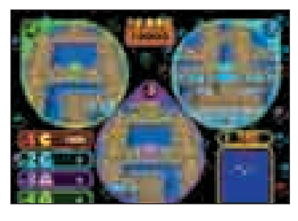
# ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

VIEWPOINT
**1080° AVALANCHE**
See? We told you this one was a grower. It might not have the obvious longevity of something like *SSX3*, but that doesn't make it any less fun or playable. Underneath all that white stuff there's a quality snowboarding game with plenty to offer.



VIEWPOINT
**PAC-MAN VS**
Who'd have thought that one of the most enjoyable games on the GameCube right now would feature Namco's dot-munching creation? Not us, that's for sure. We're just sad that the only way to get it is to buy the rather dodgy *R: Racing Evolution*.

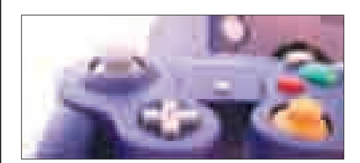


VIEWPOINT
**GAME BOY PLAYER**
Okay, so maybe the Game Boy Player isn't a game – but there's never been a better time to own one than right now. *Harvest Moon, Metroid: Zero Mission, Final Fantasy Tactics, Fire Emblem…* Ooh, you're spoilt for choice, you lucky people.



# GAMECUBE

**MANUFACTURER** Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 3 May 2002 **MEDIA** 3-inch Optical Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £79.99



**Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look.** While third-party support is dwindling, it's the first-party releases that really offer some quality gaming. Nintendo still makes some of the finest games ever, so missing out isn't really an option.

## TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

| No. | Title | Publisher | Developer | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Metroid Prime | Nintendo | In-House | A genre-redefining title in every sense |
| 2 | Zelda: The Wind Waker | Nintendo | In-House | One of the many reasons to own a GameCube |
| 3 | F-Zero GX | Nintendo | Amusement Vision | SEGA does it again with a brilliant retro remake |
| 4 | Winning Eleven 6 IMPORT | Konami | In-House | The closest you'll get to *Pro Evolution* |
| 5 | Super Monkey Ball 2 | SEGA | Amusement Vision | Monkeys and balls – what more could you want? |
| 6 | TimeSplitters 2 | Eidos | Free Radical | More multiplayer fun than most other FPS games |
| 7 | Mario Kart: Double Dash!! | Nintendo | In-House | Another great moment in gaming from Nintendo |
| 8 | Ikaruga | Treasure | In-House | Hard as nails and incredibly addictive |
| 9 | Viewtiful Joe | Capcom | In-House | Looks great, plays even better |
| 10 | Eternal Darkness | Nintendo | Silicon Knights | Scary in a different sense – very intriguing |
| 11 | Soul Calibur II | Namco | In-House | The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay |
| 12 | Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour IMPORT | Nintendo | Camelot | Golfing fun without the need for Tiger Woods |
| 13 | Resident Evil | Capcom | In-House | Still as scary as it was when it first came out |
| 14 | Resident Evil Zero | Capcom | In-House | An interesting twist on the *Resident Evil* franchise |
| 15 | Skies Of Arcadia Legends | SEGA | Overworks | Absorbing RPG action with added 'arrrr' factor |
| 16 | Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles | Nintendo | Square-Enix | Different from the norm, with a distinct multiplayer flavour |
| 17 | Mario Party 5 | Nintendo | In-House | Mini-game goodness, whether alone or with friends |
| 18 | 1080° Avalanche | Nintendo | In-House | A markedly different game to the competition |
| 19 | Star Wars: Rogue Leader | Activision | Factor 5 | Forget the follow-up – the original still has the edge |
| 20 | Animal Crossing IMPORT | Nintendo | In-House | The only game to keep us playing for a full year |

## PROGRESSIVE DRAW

Metroid Prime
**The only game so far to score a perfect ten in the magazine – shouldn't that tell you something?**



Zelda: The Wind Waker
**Forget what people said about Link's new cel-shaded look being bad – they were wrong. Really wrong.**



F-Zero GX
**Faster than a speeding bullet? Oh yes. In fact, *F-Zero* is faster than a speeding bullet that's already late.**

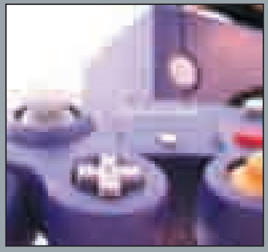


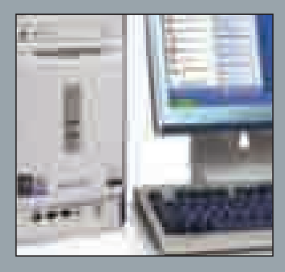
Winning Eleven 6: Final Evolution
***Pro Evo*'s never coming out on the Cube, so you'll have to make do with this.**



Super Monkey Ball 2
**Any game with monkeys in it is great – that's the law. But then we'd still love this even if we didn't have to.**



# GBA

**MANUFACTURER** Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 22 June 2001
**MEDIA** Flash Cartridge **CURRENT PRICE** £89.99



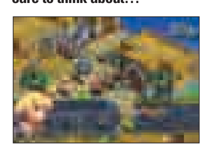
**Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play.** The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is also available now in a variety of colours.

## TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

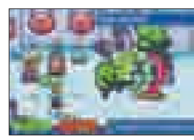
| No. | Title | Publisher | | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Final Fantasy Tactics Advance | Nintendo | | Square-Enix |
| 2 | Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga | Nintendo | | AlphaDream |
| 3 | Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 4 | Advance Wars 2 | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 5 | Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 6 | Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town | Ubisoft | | Natsume |
| 7 | Golden Sun: The Lost Age | Nintendo | | Camelot |
| 8 | Metroid Fusion | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 9 | Fire Emblem | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 10 | Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow | Konami | | In-House |
| 11 | Pokémon Ruby / Sapphire | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 12 | Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe | Wanadoo | | Crawfish |
| 13 | Street Fighter Alpha 3 | Ubisoft | | Crawfish |
| 14 | Yu-Gi-Oh!: World Championship 2004 | Konami | | In-House |
| 15 | Super Mario Advance 4: SMB 3 | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 16 | Pinball Challenge Deluxe | Ubisoft | | Binary 9 |
| 17 | Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire | Nintendo | | In-House |
| 18 | Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand | Konami | IMPORT | In-House |
| 19 | Medal Of Honor: Infiltrator | Electronic Arts | | In-House |
| 20 | Wario Ware Inc: Mega Microgame$ | Nintendo | | In-House |

## TEXAS HOLD 'EM

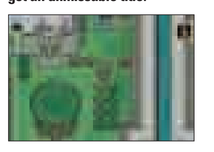
Final Fantasy Tactics
**So in-depth and absorbing that you'll end up losing more hours of your life than you'd care to think about…**



Mario & Luigi
**A genuinely fresh and playable *Mario* game that's not a remake of an old SNES title. Absolutely brilliant.**



Zelda: Link To The Past
**The SNES port is fantastic on its own, but combine that with *Four Swords* and you've got an unmissable title.**



# PC

**MANUFACTURER** N/A **UK LAUNCH DATE** N/A
**MEDIA** 4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £variable



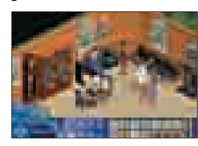
**While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer.** With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

## TWENTY MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

| No. | Title | Publisher | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The Sims | EA | Maxis |
| 2 | Deus Ex | Eidos | Ion Storm |
| 3 | Grand Theft Auto: Vice City | Rockstar Games | Rockstar North |
| 4 | Championship Manager 03/04 | Eidos | Sports Interactive |
| 5 | Half-Life | Vivendi | Valve Software |
| 6 | Hidden & Dangerous 2 | Gathering | Illusion |
| 7 | Pro Evolution Soccer 3 | Konami | In-House |
| 8 | Medieval: Total War | Activision | Creative Assembly |
| 9 | Grim Fandango | LucasArts | In-House |
| 10 | Rise Of Nations | Microsoft | Big Huge Games |
| 11 | System Shock | EA | Looking Glass Games |
| 12 | Call Of Duty | Activision | Infinity Ward |
| 13 | Sam And Max Hit The Road | Activision | LucasArts |
| 14 | Commandos 2: Men Of Courage | Eidos | Pyro |
| 15 | Sensible World Of Soccer | Sensible Software | Renegade |
| 16 | Operation Flashpoint | Codemasters | In-House |
| 17 | Day of Defeat | Activision | Valve Software |
| 18 | Tron 2.0 | Buena Vista | Monolith |
| 19 | Battlefield 1942 | EA | Digital Illusions |
| 20 | Unreal Tournament 2003 | Atari | Epic Games |

## ANACONDA

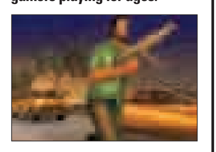
The Sims
**Milked for all it's worth and yet still as great as it was when it first appeared. You've got to love *The Sims*.**



Deus Ex
**Freeform gaming as it was meant to be. If only all games were this way. We can't wait for the sequel to arrive.**



GTA: Vice City
**Looks better than its PS2 cousin and still has just as much 'cool' factor to keep PC gamers playing for ages.**




180
PAGES OF
FRANTIC MULTIPLAYER
BLASTING
TIMESPLITTE
ON SALE


NEXT MONTH
MORE… PREVIEWS
Resident Evil 4, The Movies, S.T.A.L.K.E.R., Killer 7, Red Dead Revolver and more…
MORE… REVIEWS
Some great games in time for E3 – Ninja Gaiden, Transformers, Painkiller and Counter-Strike are just a few of the big titles coming soon.
MORE… FEATURES
Yes, it's that time again – the games™ Awards are just around the corner. If you want to have your say, you'll need to check out the next issue.
RS 3
22 APRIL 04

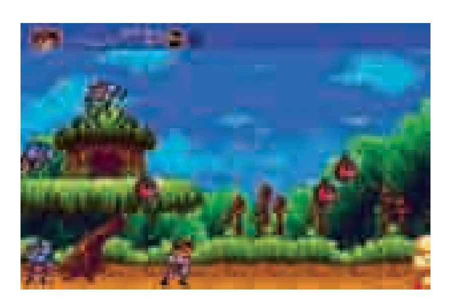
# CONTACT

## ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

### FOUR PAGES OF MUSINGS FROM YOU, OUR DEAR READERS, ON THE MATTERS THAT, ER, MATTER TO YOU. NOW WITH ADDED 'STAR LETTER' GOODNESS




The gentler side of gaming, the scapegoating of our favourite hobby, and *GTA: San Andreas* – you've all been getting quite worked up this month. And not one letter about Nintendo. Hurrah!



## MAKING CONTACT

**There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with gamesTM. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:**

**gamesTM**
Highbury Entertainment
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the internet. Email us at this address:
**gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who read **gamesTM** will be able to get onto the site – and if you have bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **gamesTM** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

**Step One:**
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

**Step Two:**
Type the following into the browser window:
**www.totalgames.net**
You will arrive at the Totalgames website. From here click on the 'forum' icon. News users will have to register via the 'new user' icon – it's a simple step-by-step process which we're sure you can manage.

**Step Three:**
Once registered, simply email **gamestm@paragon.co.uk** with the password '**Cover**' and your username. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.

**THIS OCTOBER WILL** be very interesting, as it sees the release of *GTA: San Andreas* (at least it does at the time I'm writing this) – the continuation of what is currently the most important videogame franchise in the world.

The fact is, when it comes to *Vice City* no other game has garnered both the mainstream publicity and critical acclaim. Titles such as *Mortal Kombat*, *Night Trap* and a host of shock home-computer titles pieced together and circulated on the underground scene were equally controversial, but they didn't have the sheer depth of gameplay that *Vice City* has. Take away the blood and gore from the original *Mortal Kombat* and you have a pretty basic *Street Fighter II* clone that your average gamer wouldn't have looked at twice. Even with the blood and gore, the furore that surrounded *Mortal Kombat* died down within weeks of its release. However, *Vice City* is still the centre of controversy today, over a year since its initial release. It's a cliché, but all publicity is good publicity, and the game is still being lapped up.

On the other hand, a lot of critically acclaimed games such as the *Metal Gear Solid*s and *Final Fantasy*s of this world are equally ground-breaking and innovative, but they lack that certain something that gets the 'Colonel *Daily Mail*s' fuming over their morning kippers. So we come to *San Andreas*. After Janet Jackson's shenanigans at the Super Bowl, the American political correctness brigades are lashing out across all media, which puts Rockstar in an interesting position. It can either tone down the sex, drugs and violence, which would ruin the game's authenticity as a crime simulation, or it could focus on increasing the controversy that attracted the big audiences in the first place, perhaps at the expense of the gameplay.

Personally, from Rockstar's track record, I have great faith that neither gameplay nor artistic licence will be compromised and I, like the rest of the gaming world, am looking forward to *GTA: San Andreas*.
**Daniel Adams**

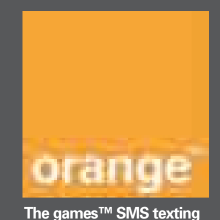
**gamesTM**: As far as the *GTA* series is concerned, Rockstar has certainly gained a reputation for delivering quality games that combine controversy and great gameplay, which is why you can already pre-order *GTA: San Andreas* seven months before its release. This is largely thanks to the way that Rockstar has promoted the series over the years – this has even stretched as far as employing Max Clifford's expertise to ensure that our more conservative friends get rankled by the moral decline caused, it would seem, by just one game. We doubt that Rockstar will ever dilute the format to make it more palatable for the reasons you have given. Our concern is that Rockstar will either make the game even more gruesome (and become a one-trick pony à la *Manhunt*) or fail to innovate or evolve the series; more of

**"IT'S A CLICHÉ, BUT ALL PUBLICITY IS GOOD PUBLICITY, AND VICE CITY IS STILL BEING LAPPED UP OVER A YEAR SINCE ITS RELEASE"**

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the same with just a location change might leave gamers disappointed. All of this is purely academic, and thanks to Rockstar's dogged determination to remain tight-lipped about its games until release (another PR trick to make the game even more desirable) we'll all have to wait with bated breath.

**ROB DEAN'S LETTER** of the month (issue 16) made some very interesting points, but he must realise that ever since the teenage revolution of the Fifties the older generations, general do-gooders and busybodies have used the latest youth craze as a scapegoat for all the evil of the world.

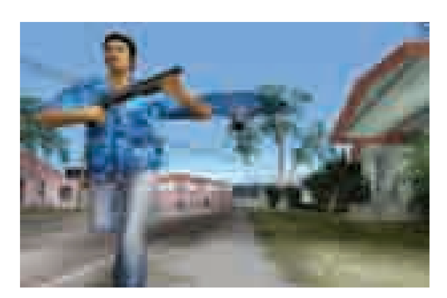
In the Fifties and Sixties it was rock and roll and pop music that warped our fragile minds. In the Seventies it was, er, space hoppers or something. The Eighties saw the advent of the video nasty that apparently gave rise to young people worshipping the occult and shooting each other. And in the early Nineties it was gangsta rap that made youngsters carry out drive-by shootings.Today it's the videogame that receives the wrath of politically correct softies trying to blame the sins of today's youth on the latest *GTA* game.

It's a fact of life and it will carry on and on, long after we are gone. So please don't worry, Mr Dean. Videogames are here to stay and until the next youth craze the media will use games as the scapegoat for everything evil.

**Neil Harvey**

**games™**: We couldn't have put it better ourselves. Well, we might have been able to, but you got there first and then we were busy and, you know, we forgot…

Will the next instalment of *GTA* be affected by the US's renewed prudishness?



**I WAS TALKING** to a friend back home in the States last night. We discussed how games have developed over the last two decades since we really started playing them. We started laughing at what I would call the 'public conscience' of the industry: people screaming 'the end is nigh' every time a game is released that is vaguely commercial.

The truth of the matter is that as games become more mainstream they will pick up more traits that were previously the preserve of other forms of media. I remember magazine articles prophesying hellfire for the 'artistic integrity of the medium' when a single static Pepsi advert appeared in the background of *Magic Johnson's Fast Break* on the NES. As I recall, the 15 years since that game was released have seen no more commercial exploitation than one would really expect.

As with other forms of media, videogames vary enormously in terms of quality – the film and music industries turn out crap that few could recommend, yet it somehow gets purchased. But let's be honest, if every game was as good as *Prince Of Persia* we'd fail to appreciate what was truly stellar. As long as there are good games being released, and as long as every once in a while you get truly special games, like *Street Fighter* or *Zelda*, then the industry will have a long, healthy life.

Sure, everyone hates bad games, but the solution is simple: stay informed, rent before you buy, if your so-called 'mainstream gamer' keeps crappy companies in business, fair play – just like every medium needs a *Casablanca*/*Metroid Prime*, there will always be an element of *Look Who's Talking Too*/*Turok Evolution*.

**James Krom**

# CONTACT

## ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

## TEXT LIFE...

I got so pissed off with a SNES game once that i bit the controller & left tooth marks in it. Think it was Mario Kart 150cc. Grrr.
**gamesTM: Easy there, tiger.**

gosh can't wait 2 see the new core games herdy gerdy & project eden, news pg 12. u got a release date 4 them?
**gamesTM: We thought that we'd give them another go to see if they would be better this time…**

No Sonic Heroes review after the curtain rings hint last ish? Nice picture of Jordan though, stay focussed.
**gamesTM: Ah, but the back page doesn't always hint at *what's* coming next, just that *something* is coming next.**

I've just bought an AMD64 computer for 1500. I hope that it's good…
**gamesTM: So do we.**

Remember super punchout. N5 punchout? That would be heven to see it again.
**gamesTM: Or you could just try page 135.**

Loved the Cover Me Badd section but some pics were too small, especially Ghouls 'N' Ghosts. I remember how shocking it was, pls reprint a larger pic
**gamesTM: What, and inflict that on everyone again?**

Your review of need for speed underground is all wrong, it's a great game with a good satisfaction rating, it should have been given at least 8/10
**gamesTM: You give it 8/10, we gave it 5/10 – you are right and so are we. Simple as that.**

In response to the guy who all the way to London to play OutRun 2 (issue 14), he should've tried the Trocadero in Piccadilly. There's a head2head cab…
**gamesTM: Don't you just hate it when that happens?**

Games, your retro section is great but please please please make it larger!
**gamesTM: We have made it a little larger recently, but this is supposed to be a forward-looking magazine. We love retro games but our focus remains in the future.**

Is it just me or does everyone's cover of gamesTM curl up after reading it?
**gamesTM: Only when we print howlers about Core's pending releases…**

## "LET'S BE HONEST, IF EVERY GAME WAS AS GOOD AS PRINCE OF PERSIA WE'D FAIL TO APPRECIATE WHAT WAS TRULY STELLAR"

gamesTM: Group hug, everyone? This is kind of what we've been saying all along, but it's nice to have our sentiments mirrored by our readers now and again. There will always be bad games, but, as you say, it just makes the great titles stand out like shiny sixpences among the overcooked and unappetising plates of gaming Christmas pudding.

**THE QUESTION OF** a single format is one that keeps cropping up in your letters page, and with good reason I think. The idea that competition drives innovation doesn't quite tell the whole story because the fact is that there are a vast number of developers and publishers who make a tidy living producing games for all formats. SEGA certainly hasn't ceased to

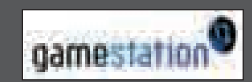
## LETTER OF THE MONTH

**I ENJOYED YOUR** 'Where Is The Love?' feature (issue 15), and I believe it raises many valid points about gaming. To my surprise, I encountered the these points just days after reading your magazine. If before Christmas you had said to me that the only Xbox game that would appeal to my wife would be *Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, I would not have believed you. In the past she's played *Mario Tennis* and *Dancing Stage* and was very impressed with the EyeToy. However, the Xbox was a no-go.

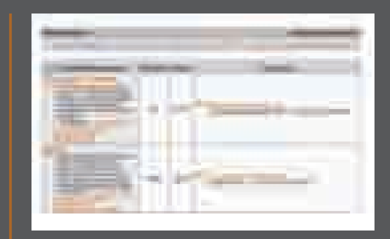
This all changed, however, when I got *DOAXBV*. To my astonishment my wife showed an interest in the game. The relationship angle, combined with the non-violent/competitive nature of the game, appealed to her. These qualities aren't usually found in games, but obviously appeal to many people regardless of gender (look at the success of *The Sims*). With this in mind, I think Tecmo missed a chance that could be rectified in a sequel. It should include the male characters from the *DOA* series, which could then lead onto sexual and political conflicts as found in *I'm A Celebrity… Get Me Out Of Here*. Imagine one of your volleyball partners storming off the island after catching you alone with Christie, giving her a new bikini, leaving you to pick up the pieces and trying to get another partner and so on.

Relationship games are successful in Japan and could be another genre to push videogames into the mainstream. Now all we need is to combine this with the EyeToy as a controller and we have a hit…
**David Howlett**

**gamesTM: We reckon a more considered approach to relationships in games would be a great way of appealing to male and female gamers, though *DOAXBV* is an odd example, seeing as it was sold on the ample charms of its characters. As it stands, games are targeted at the testosterone-addled side of the market and attempts to entice female gamers are rather ham-fisted – *Barbie Horse Adventures*, anyone? Why not use your GameStation vouchers to treat the missus to some new games?**




**If you'd like to line your pockets with £100 of Gamestation vouchers then send us a games-related letter crammed with sparkling wit and pertinent points. Extra marks will be awarded for neat handwriting.**



# FROM THE FORUM

## THE INTERNET – A FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE OR A SPOILER OF GAMES?

**Jetman**
I am addicted to the internet, and games sites specifically. But is it taking the fun out of videogames? From the day that the first screenshots of a new game appear on the net, forums go into overdrive, dissecting every press release, discussing with other people what's good and what's bad. Then the day of release arrives and importers start posting their thoughts, usually beginning with the poorer aspects of the game. Within ten minutes I feel like I've already played the game, found every secret and beaten all the bosses. There's nothing left for me to discover. Game over. Before the internet I relied purely on magazines to drip feed me all the info on new games, followed by the review. But the experience wasn't tainted. I bought the game and was left to my own devices. I found out for myself what was good or bad about the game. I've tried to quit the internet on numerous occasions, but the pull is just too great. Are there any other addicts here who probably (like me) spend more time browsing the net than actually playing the damn games?

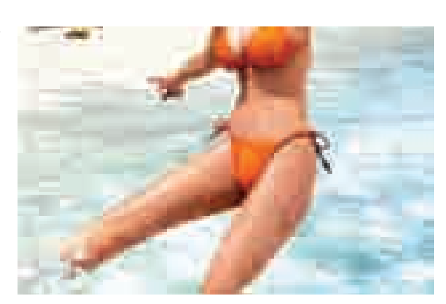
**SuperAl**
I probably spend more time on the net than I do games, but that's probably because I can't be bothered to play games a lot of the time. Forums are much less effort. But, yes, you are right. Before the internet (or before I started using it a lot), the only stuff you knew about a game was what you read in magazines. When the game was released it was so new. With being able to download videos and god knows what else, and, as you said, read other people's input before you have played it, the element of your first opinion is taken from a game. I'm not sure if this is a bad thing or not. It helps you avoid poor games that have been reviewed well in a magazine. You can never have too many opinions (when it comes to a game, anyway).

**RetroBob**
I agree, nowadays we dissect every piece of information about a big game and often form an opinion without even playing it (whether we admit it or not). Perhaps we know too much about games before we buy them and this takes some of the fun out of it – but it's difficult to resist looking as we're hungry for information.

**Jetman**
On numerous occasions I've been on the verge of buying a game, only to hesitate at the last moment due to someone's comments on a forum.

**mallorn**
I feel that the internet has added to my enjoyment of games. Apart from being a good source of gaming news, places like GameFAQs, being US-based, have just the sort of early real consumer feedback I look for before deciding to buy a game. You do have to discipline yourself to avoid spoilers but I haven't ruined anything seriously for myself yet. I also like the shared experience of playing a new game alongside, quite literally, the rest of the world. You almost get a team spirit on some message boards where people are discovering ways of getting through problems of either a technical or gameplay nature. The fact is that most games contain things not covered in any official guide or independent walkthroughs, or that have been missed by the developers and testers. Only people who are playing or have played the game know these things. Without the internet, access to this vast resource would be virtually impossible.

**Masterhunter**
It helps not to take everything people say as gospel truth. You may find a game everyone seems to love to be boring, or a game everyone seems to hate to be brilliant. After all, it's all just opinions.



*Xtreme Beach Volleyball* – designed for men, played by women.

innovate since leaving the hardware market, and probably represents the biggest hole in the argument for multiple formats. When EA releases the same game for every format on Earth it's clearly not innovating, but how much money could it save to pour into niche titles if it only had to invest in development of one version of a game?

Furthermore, if there was only one format then, as with the PSone, even small developers would be virtually guaranteed a large return simply because of the vast installed user base. The element of competition wouldn't be dead in any case. One publisher would still be vying with another for our money and so innovation and originality may even become more of a factor.

Graphical prowess, on the other hand, would be less of a factor if all games were running on the same format. And when a new version of the machine came out, backwards compatibility would ensure that older classics still have a home, making retro gaming a lot more accessible. Not to mention that retro fans would have more room in their homes thanks to not having to have ten different consoles.

Think about it – if videogaming was on a standard format we'd have a situation similar to VCRs or the early days of PCs when IBM's architecture was open to anyone. Anyone could come along and make and sell a console that could run all the same games, but maybe your console has remote control, or a larger amount of memory for saving game scores, and so on.

Okay, it's unlikely to happen, but it's a nice dream. In the meantime let's not be too gloomy. I find it odd that supposedly hardcore gamers are moaning about a dearth of originality and innovation because I don't see one. Yes, there are lots of generic FPS, driving and beat-'em-up games out there, so what? There are still plenty of original and imaginative titles, whatever the genre, whatever the format, and in the 25 years or so that I've been gaming that's a situation that hasn't changed. For every *Elite*, there were a thousand duffers. Plus ça change…
**Chris Dempsey**

**games™**: Perhaps you're right, and perhaps because we are so accustomed to multiple formats the idea of console rivalry has become so ingrained that we blindly continue to argue for it. That said, we still believe that having a choice of consoles is best. Of course we believe that Nintendo, if it ever stopped producing hardware, would continue to create innovative games, but it would be to the detriment of the future of gaming. One of the reasons why Nintendo has remained one of the true innovators is that it knows the formats that it's working on inside out and can get the best out of them simply because it made them – would you want to lose that? Could you imagine Sony developing a new piece of hardware and a joypad with a rival software producer, such as Nintendo, in mind? We can't. Certainly it might be cheaper and, yes, there would be benefits, but you'd compromise choice, rivalry, innovation and perhaps even fun. And in an industry that's firmly based on those values, we'd rather things stayed the way they are. However, your point about saving space by not having to have ten consoles is valid – we have Xboxes, after all…

**"It's no time to be lazy – we've got trouble!"**

